

State of Mississippi Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2 INTRODUCTION AND VISION FOR DIGITAL SKILLS AND ACCESSIBILITY	5
2.1 Vision.....	5
2.2 Alignment.....	6
2.3 Strategy and Objectives.....	8
3 CURRENT STATE OF DIGITAL SKILLS AND ACCESSIBILITY : BARRIERS AND ASSETS	11
3.1 Asset Inventory.....	11
3.1.1 Digital Assets by Covered Population	11
3.1.2 Existing Digital Skills and Accessibility Plans	14
3.1.3 Existing Digital Skills and Accessibility Programs	14
3.1.4 Broadband Adoption	15
3.1.5 Broadband Affordability.....	15
3.2 Covered Populations Needs Assessment.....	16
3.2.1 Broadband Adoption and Access.....	20
3.2.2 Broadband Affordability	20
4 COLLABORATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	21
4.1 Coordination and Outreach Strategy	21
4.1.1 Community Engagement Meetings.....	22
4.1.2 Mass Media Outreach	23
4.1.3 Surveys and Focus Groups.....	25
4.1.4 Stakeholder Meetings.....	33
4.1.5 State and Local Governments.....	35
4.1.6 Public Comment.....	36
4.1.7 Implementing the Plan	36



TABLE OF CONTENTS

5 IMPLEMENTATION	38
5.1 Implementation Strategy & Key Activities	38
5.2 Timeline	41
6 CONCLUSION	42
7 APPENDICES	43

1. Executive Summary

This plan was compiled to meet the requirements for Mississippi’s Digital Skills and Accessibility (DSA) Plan as contemplated in Section 60304(c) of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021. Mississippi will share in a \$1.44 billion national fund for implementation of this plan. The amount of funding available to Mississippi or detailed funding requirements are unknown at this time but are expected in mid-2024.

The Mississippi DSA Plan outlines key goals and objectives, alignment with other governmental entities, and strategies for reaching these goals. The Plan inventories the current state of digital skills and broadband accessibility around the state, as well as defining needs to be addressed. The Plan details collaboration with stakeholders and extensive efforts BEAM has undertaken over the last year for stakeholder engagement. Finally, the Plan discusses implementation of the Plan and strategies for increasing digital literacy and accessibility in Mississippi.

FROM THE COMMUNITY:

“My grandmother finally decided to hop on the technology train and get Wi-Fi in her home. When she invited a cable provided over to help get her set up, he told her to pick a password that she will be able to remember. My grandma immediately said she would like to use her phone number as her password. The provider responded “ok, well just know your password is vulnerable.” A few months pass by and my grandma needed my mom’s help setting up her brand new smart tv to the Wi-Fi. Well, my mom asked my grandma what is her Wi-Fi password, and my grandma says, “well the cable man said my password is ‘vulnerable.’” Needless to say, my grandma’s password was not ‘vulnerable’. After we called and got everything straightened out, I must say, that sure got a tickle out my mom and me.”

2. Introduction and Vision for Digital Skills and Accessibility

2.1 VISION

Mississippi's vision includes broadband accessibility for all citizens with numerous pathways for continued learning so all can partake of the incredible opportunities available in this digital age. Deployment funded by the federal Broadband Equity and Accessibility Deployment program will provide affordable high-speed internet access to all Mississippians. Concurrently, the federal Digital Equity State Program will allow Mississippi to leverage existing digital skills and training programs and define new pathways for our citizens to access the ever growing and changing opportunities provided by technology. This investment in deployment, digital skills training, and increased accessibility is a much needed investment in Mississippi's future.

The State of Mississippi has momentum. Last year saw over \$6 billion in new economic development projects within the State. Per capita personal income increased by over 20% in the past few years and unemployment remains at an all-time low. Mississippi's educational gains have been referred to as the "Mississippi Miracle." Students went from being ranked forty-ninth in 2013 for 4th grade reading to twenty-first in the nation in 2022. In 4th grade math, Mississippi went from dead last to twenty-third. Graduation rates are better than the national average, and students from all walks of life are finding success in Mississippi.

Mississippi is focused on the future, and digital skills and accessibility are the key to solving many of the problems of the past. Device access and high-speed internet availability at every residence will provide our students from pre-k through the graduate level with educational resources never before available. Remote work will give opportunities to those who may have transportation, mobility, or childcare issues that otherwise kept them out of the workforce. Tech jobs will proliferate among our citizens as workforce development programs focus on the skills of the future. Access to telehealth will provide healthcare for those living in remote areas that lack providers, and be a driving force in lowering Mississippi's high rate of infant and maternal mortality. The prevalence of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes will decrease with access to monitoring and increased methods of intervention. Precision agriculture will exponentially increase crop yields for our farm families. Connectivity will propel our small businesses into the global economy.

The opportunities and benefits of broadband accessibility for all Mississippians are unlimited. The BEAM Office intends to work in partnership with federal, state, and local governments and agencies, nonprofit, educational institutions, associations, and all others to deploy service to all, provide skills training, create pathways for device access, and support ongoing digital learning. Mississippi has momentum, and broadband accessibility will keep that momentum moving.

Broadband accessibility holds immense potential for Mississippians, offering a wide array of opportunities and benefits. The BEAM Office's collaborative approach involving various stakeholders from federal, state, and local levels, as well as nonprofits, educational institutions, and associations, is crucial for deploying

services effectively. Prioritizing large screen devices ensures maximum utilization of internet resources, while skills training and device access initiatives create pathways for digital skills. This concerted effort not only sustains Mississippi’s momentum but also fosters ongoing digital learning, enriching communities statewide.

2.2 ALIGNMENT

The objectives of Mississippi’s Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan has a far-reaching impact as they intersect with and contribute to various overarching goals set forth by various agencies in in the state. These encompass but are not limited to, fostering economic and workforce development, advancing educational attainment, promoting healthy aging initiatives, and facilitating enhanced access to vital telehealth and telemonitoring services. By addressing digital skills and accessibility, the plan aims to create a holistic and interconnected framework that aligns with the state’s broader ambitions in these crucial areas, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and technologically empowered society.

Economic and Workforce Outcomes

[Mississippi Department of Human Services 5-Year Strategic Plan:](#)

The Mississippi Department of Human Services’ 5-Year Strategic Plan demonstrates a commitment to improving the well-being of its clients by addressing economic security and workforce readiness comprehensively. It is a proactive step toward creating a more prosperous and self-sufficient community in the state of Mississippi.

[Mississippi FY 2022 Appalachian Regional Commission Development Plan:](#)

The Mississippi Appalachian Regional Office’s development plan is a comprehensive roadmap aimed at achieving several key objectives related to economic development and community improvement within the Appalachian Region in Mississippi.

[Mississippi Development Authority \(MDA\) JLBC Strategic Plan FY 2021:](#)

MDA’s strategic plan aims to create an environment where businesses can prosper, infrastructure is modernized, the workforce is highly skilled, economic development services are accessible and efficient, and tourism contributes to the state’s economic well-being. This strategic plan reflects a comprehensive approach to fostering economic growth and prosperity in Mississippi.

[2022 Mississippi Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act State Plan:](#)

AccelerateMS in conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security placed a strong emphasis on providing workers with the skills and credentials needed for success in the job market, while also promoting inclusivity and equal opportunity for all residents. By addressing these key aspects, the plan aims to create a more robust and equitable workforce that can drive economic growth and prosperity throughout the state.

[Mississippi Economic Council Securing Mississippi’s Future Vision for Economic Growth:](#)

Growing the economy, increasing the population, and strengthening infrastructure while also fostering job growth are interconnected goals that can mutually reinforce one another. Here’s a comprehensive strategy that addresses these objectives.

Educational Outcomes

[Mississippi Department of Education 5-Year Strategic Plan FY 2023:](#)

Creating a world-class educational system with the goal of equipping students with the knowledge and skills to excel in college, the workforce, and life as responsible citizens and parents is a laudable aspiration.

[Mississippi Connect:](#)

Mississippi Connect aims to provide technology for every public-school student, enhancing both in-school and at-home learning. This unexpected shift has prompted a reimagining of digital education, emphasizing accessibility. The state is committed to meeting this need for student success.

[Mississippi Connect Digital Learning:](#)

The Digital Learning Coach (DLC) program offers personalized assistance to school administrators and educators as they navigate the complexities of digital learning and leverage educational technology to enhance student achievement.

[Mississippi Public Broadcasting:](#)

MPB provides quality education radio, television, and digital content statewide with programming that reflects Mississippi's unique culture and heritage. MPB offers a robust education department focused on providing educational resources and curriculum to Mississippians of all ages.

Health Outcomes

[UMMC 2025 Five-Year Strategic Plan:](#)

The University of Mississippi University's five-year plan outlines strategic priorities and investments. It includes five key strategies: maximizing care quality, clinical growth, statewide healthcare expansion, academic program advancement, and research strengthening. Specific measurable goals will be set annually within these strategies.

[2022 State Health Improvement Plan:](#)

While the State's plan has a multitude of objectives, telehealth is a major resource lacking in rural areas, therefore, the State aims to enhance the accessibility and availability of preventive healthcare services, with a particular emphasis on expanding telehealth offerings. This initiative seeks to make preventive care more accessible to a wider population, utilizing digital platforms and remote consultations to ensure individuals can easily access essential healthcare services and screenings.

Civic and Social Engagement

[Mississippi Library Commission 2022 Annual Report:](#)

The MLC made substantial achievements to include the growth of resources within the MAGNOLIA database collection, the introduction of remote services such as book clubs, speaker enrichment programs, and online story times for young children throughout the state, as well as the ongoing provision of IT connectivity to all public libraries in the region.

Delivery of Other Essential Service

Mississippi Department of Housing and Urban Development Consolidated Plan:

The State seeks to provide better housing, living conditions, and economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents by efficiently utilizing available funding for community development, ultimately improving the quality of life for all.

Veterans Affairs Program for Homeless Veterans:

This cooperative initiative between HUD and VA unites HUD housing vouchers with VA support services to assist homeless Veterans and their families in locating and maintaining permanent housing.

Mississippi Department of Public Safety Strategic Plan:

The Mississippi Department of Public Safety aims to streamline the driver's license acquisition process, making it more efficient and convenient. They intend to establish a virtual examination procedure to reduce wait times and minimize the need for travel. Additionally, they plan to form a Cybersecurity Task Force to enhance readiness and provide support to individuals in need of such services.

East Central Mississippi United Way Strategic Plan:

Our mission is to enhance the well-being of our community by leveraging the essential human, financial, and strategic resources needed to provide tangible enhancements and resolutions to the vital health and human service challenges within the communities we support.

2.3 STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

BEAM defined four goals and five objectives by engaging with the community through meetings, surveys and focus groups. These directives are poised to guide the state toward the realization of its vision. The goals and objectives identified in this plan were developed from meetings with various stakeholder groups, surveys, and more targeted focus groups. Working to reach these goals and objectives will move the State toward this vision of increased broadband accessibility and increased digital skills for all Mississippians. Each covered population has its own unique set of needs and barriers, but also shares in certain basic obstacles such as lack of service or affordability. This Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan is designed to adapt to each covered population and recognize their distinct challenges.

The below goals and key performance indicators (KPI) break out the state's current baseline data for near-term (3 – 5 years) and long-term (10 years) targets.

GOALS:

1. Increase affordable broadband connectivity

a. Objective 1.1 - Ensure all internet service providers who receive funding from BEAM provide a low-cost plan for households and increase participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program.

KPI: Approximately 595,397 households are eligible for ACP!¹

¹ "ACP Data," EducationSuperHighway, October 4, 2023, <https://www.educationsuperhighway.org/no-home-left-offline/acp-data/#dashboard>.

Baseline: 228,783 households enrolled²

Near-term target: Increase baseline by 30%.

Long-term target: Increase baseline by 75%.

b. Objective 1.2 - Deploy broadband to all unserved and underserved locations in Mississippi and increase existing and future adoption rates.

KPI: For KPIs of broadband deployment, please see page 47 Section 5.5 Estimated Timeline for Universal Service of the State of Mississippi: Five-Year Action Plan.

Targeted Covered Population: covered households, aging individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier, racial/ethnic minorities and rural communities

2. Make broadband enabled large screen devices affordable and accessible.

a. Objective 2.1 - Catalog programs including device donations, lending, and refurbishments.

KPI: Increase the number of individuals in Mississippians who have access to a device that can connect to the internet.

Baseline: 40.7% of the State has access to a computing device at home.³

Near-term target: Increase baseline by 10.7% to reach 50.7% of Mississippians with access to a broadband enabled device.

Long-term target: Increase baseline by 30% to reach 70% of Mississippians with access to a broadband enabled device.

Targeted Covered Population: covered households, aging individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier, racial/ethnic minorities and rural communities

3. Increase digital literacy programs throughout the state.

a. Objective 3.1 - Make digital literacy training available to all Mississippians, particularly those within all covered populations.

KPI: Monitor the number of digital literacy and skills training programs (cybersecurity, telehealth, privacy, general skills and more) and number of Mississippians served by these programs.

Baseline: Thirty-nine programs were identified through the Digital Asset Survey created in partnership with BEAM and Mississippi State Extension Service. The Digital Assets identified as of October 18, 2023, can be found in A.3.

² "ACP Data," EducationSuperHighway, October 4, 2023, <https://www.educationsuperhighway.org/no-home-left-offline/acp-data/#dash-board>.

³ <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42>

Near-term target: Increase the number of programs Mississippians served by existing programs by 15%.

Long-term target: Increase the number of programs Mississippians served by existing programs by 25%.

Targeted Covered Population: covered households, aging individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier, racial/ethnic minorities, incarcerated individuals and rural communities

4. Online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services.

a. Objective 4.1 - Develop an accessibility standards guide for agencies and encourage agencies to adopt.

KPI: Encourage state and local governmental entities to make their websites and online services accessible to all Mississippians.

Baseline: Numerous state agency websites are lacking ADA compliance. County and municipal governments often do not provide online services.

Near-term target: Create an accessibility standards guide and checklist. Identify local governments with limited or no online services and resources to assist in development.

Long-term target: Make the accessibility standards guide and checklist available and encourage adoption. All counties and municipalities provide full menu of online services.

Targeted Covered Population: Individuals with a language barrier, individuals with disabilities and aging individuals

FROM THE COMMUNITY:

“I received a call from a client who needed help operating her new cell phone. She was an older lady. She said she was having trouble making calls. I started by asking her what icons did she see at the top of her phone. She started with the time, then she said she sees an airplane, bars, and her battery percentage. I immediately figured out she had her phone on airplane mode. When I said this to her, she began by saying, “well I’ve never been on an airplane.” After a while of trying to explain to her that she does not have to be on an airplane for her phone to be on airplane mode, I begin to help navigate her to the settings app. Knowledge of digital skills is very important for numerous covered populations, especially the aging population.”

3. Current State of Digital Skills and Accessibility: Barriers and Assets

3.1 ASSET INVENTORY

3.1.1 DIGITAL ASSETS BY COVERED POPULATION

BEAM has undertaken a comprehensive initiative to identify and catalog digital skills programs across the state of Mississippi. This project aims to create a valuable resource for all Mississippians by developing an interactive map, accessible through BEAM’s website. The primary purpose of this map is to provide residents with a convenient means of locating programs that offer digital training opportunities and access to low-cost or discounted broadband-enabled devices.

COVERED POPULATIONS	DESCRIPTION
Covered Households	Household income is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level
Rural Community	An area other than: A city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants. Any urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants; and In the case of a grant or direct loan, a city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of greater than 20,000 inhabitants.
Aging Individuals	Individuals who are 60 years and older
Incarcerated Individuals	Individuals who are 180 days from release and participate in a reentry program, on parole/probation, serving flat time or earned release, and those in transitional housing.
Veterans	All individuals who served in the armed forces but are no longer on active duty.
Individuals with Disabilities	A person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.
Individuals with a Language Barrier	Individuals who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, often come from non-English speaking homes. Individuals who have low levels of literacy.
Racial/Ethnic Minorities	Individuals who identify as a race other than white or those who identify as any Hispanic or Latino race.

Table 1: Covered populations definitions

BEAM has achieved significant success in its mission to identify and establish partnerships with organizations that provide essential programs and resources to specific populations. This collaborative effort is instrumental in addressing the digital divide and ensuring that un/underserved communities have access to the opportunities afforded by broadband connectivity.

Below is a table highlighting the organizations that BEAM has identified, along with the populations they serve:

DIGITAL SKILLS PROGRAMS	COVERED POPULATIONS							
	Covered Households	Aging Individuals	Incarcerated Individuals	Veterans	Individuals with a Language Barrier	Racial/Ethnic Minorities	Rural Community	Individuals with Disabilities
AARP Mississippi	X	X				X	X	
AT&T	X	X			X	X		X
Basecamp Coding Academy (BCCA)	X					X	X	
The Bean Path		X				X	X	
Callaway High School	X				X			
Internet Essentials Learning Center.	X	x				x	x	
East Central Community College	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Genesis and Light Center	x	x		x	x	x		x
Issac Chapel Rosenwald	x					x		
Mississippi Coding Academy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meridian Community College	X	X		X	X			X
Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce							X	
Mississippi Department of Corrections			X			X		

Mississippi Department of Education	X	X			X	X	X	X
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation	X	X				X		X
Mississippi Farm Bureau							X	
Mississippi Head Start	X				X	X	X	X
Mississippi Housing and Urban Development Department	X	X				X		X
Mississippi Immigration Rights Alliance	X				X	X	X	
Mississippi Library Commission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mississippi School for the Blind & Deaf	X					X	X	X
Mississippi Veterans Affairs		X		X		X	X	X
PeopleShores PBC	X	X		X		X	X	

Table 2: Digital skills programs (for a detailed description refer to Appendix A1)

FROM THE COMMUNITY:

“Our sketchy internet has interfered with me being able to work from home on occasion when I have no one to stay with my husband who has Huntington’s Disease. Plus, my husband just recently got a speech device because he’s losing his ability to talk and with his device hooked to Wi-Fi, he could control the tv, make phone calls, and etc. So, having internet that doesn’t work very well has interfered with that too.”

3.1.2 EXISTING DIGITAL SKILLS AND ACCESSIBILITY PLANS

BEAM's outreach to various entities, including municipalities, nonprofits, governing agencies and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, did not uncover any existing digital skills plans.

BEAM's Digital Skills and Accessibility plan is the only comprehensive plan within the state of Mississippi. The hope is, as more awareness is highlighted of the digital barriers, other agencies, nonprofits and educational institutions will internally discuss how they can help bridge the gap and partner with BEAM to ensure all Mississippians are receiving the resources needed. This is a statewide effort that will allow all citizens to have access to affordable and reliable connectivity and the needed resources to teach digital skills, have access to low-cost or discounted devices, the opportunity to participate in telehealth and progress in their careers and education.

3.1.3 EXISTING DIGITAL SKILLS AND ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAMS

BEAM has identified the following programs that are active in the state of Mississippi and reach all covered populations.

- **Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)**

ACP is an FCC benefit program that helps ensure that eligible households get the broadband connectivity they need. ACP offers a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service and up to \$75 per month for eligible households on Tribal lands. A one-time discount of \$100, is also available, to purchase a laptop, desktop computer or tablet.

- **Black Churches for Digital Equity – Mississippi Branch**

Black Churches 4 Digital Equity is a federal assistance program that encourages families to connect to broadband internet service. This organization also works to educate members within communities about broadband internet assistance programs, trainings, and organizes leaders as advocates to get their communities connected through the ACP.

- **Mississippi Broadband Association Connect and Literacy Fund (C&L Fund)**

This fund is designed to address affordable access, digital skills training, and device ownership across Mississippi and plans to launch their first pilot program in the beginning of 2024. [The Connect and Literacy Fund plan can be viewed in Appendix A4.](#)

- **Mississippi Connects**

Mississippi Connects aspires to provide every public-school student in Mississippi with technology to support both in-school and at-home learning. They offer a multitude of benefits to students including preparation for digitally advanced careers, increased skills by narrowing the digital divide, and access to telehealth/telemedicine.

- **MSU Extension Center for Technology Outreach (CTO)**

CTO hosts educational trainings, in all 82 counties, for local communities in the state through non-formal adult education in applied technology services. Some of the trainings offered are: adult basic computer class, Excel essentials, Microsoft Office training, and smartphone basics/training.

• Thrive Mobile

Thrive Mobile addresses the digital divide by providing free high-quality, large-screen mobile devices loaded with essential health apps to underserved populations. Their goal is to simplify access to healthcare services, offer digital support, and incentivize proactive health management.

3.1.4 BROADBAND ADOPTION

BEAM collaborated with the Mississippi State Extension Service, which operates in all 82 counties of the state, to identify initiatives providing digital skills training, low-cost device distribution and related services to support BEAM's efforts in bridging the digital divide. At present, the Mississippi State Extension Service is actively engaged in research and data collection for these programs. The ultimate objective is to incorporate these programs into an interactive map that comprehensively displays all locations across the state where individuals can access digital skills programs in their vicinity. BEAM plans to spread awareness of the map through stakeholder newsletters, fliers, social media, interviews with local radio, newspapers, websites, and other identified avenues to inform the public about the availability for locating skills training or locations for access.

3.1.5 BROADBAND AFFORDABILITY

The cost of high-speed internet and the affordability of broadband-enabled devices pose obstacles in the state. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Mississippi has the highest poverty rate in the nation, with 564,439 people living in poverty, including 889,845 individuals with incomes below 150% of the poverty line.⁵

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) stands as the primary subsidy initiative for eligible households within the state. This program enables families to apply for a monthly discount of up to \$30 for internet service and up to \$75 for households residing on qualifying Tribal lands. Additionally, eligible households can receive a one-time \$100 subsidy to use toward the purchase of a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet.

BEAM has actively promoted the ACP through various community engagement meetings, where community members receive information about eligibility criteria and subsidy options available for their monthly internet service bills and one-time discounts on broadband-enabled devices. Informative flyers are distributed to attendees, providing detailed information on the program and instructions on how to apply. As a result of these outreach efforts, Mississippi currently boasts more than 200,000 subscribers to the Affordable Connectivity Program.² For detailed information on internet service providers in Mississippi that are presently involved in the Affordable Connectivity Program refer to Appendix A2.

While the ACP is an important program, its funding is currently at risk. This illustrates that other options for affordable service should exist within the state. Part of the BEAD deployment requires that internet service providers have an affordable internet plan option that meets the minimum speed requirements

⁵ United States Census Bureau, Explore census data, accessed October 9, 2023, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2020.S1701?q=Mississippi%2BIncome%2Band%2BPoverty>.

⁶ United States Census Bureau, Explore census data, accessed October 9, 2023, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2020.S1701?q=Mississippi%2BIncome%2Band%2BPoverty>.

of 100Mbps/20Mbps. These affordable plan options may be paired with ACP benefits to make the plan potentially free or very low-cost for members of the covered populations addressed within this Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan. Mississippi is still refining the low-cost service plan pricing and will have more information available as BEAD plans begin to be finalized.

3.2 COVERED POPULATIONS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Mississippi faces a mix of challenges that together create significant roadblocks to achieving widespread broadband access and adoption. BEAM is taking a comprehensive approach to deal with these issues. Through community engagement meetings and collaboration with the Digital Skills and Accessibility (DSA) Core Planning Team, BEAM has identified the barriers within the covered populations.

These challenges encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from the accessibility of devices to the affordability and reliability of high-speed internet services. The primary barriers to broadband adoption encompass more than just affordability; they also include perceived relevance and digital readiness. BEAM’s objective extends beyond merely grasping these intricate challenges; they aim to formulate pragmatic solutions that effectively bridge the digital divide, granting every Mississippian access to digital resources and opportunities.

BEAM determined the representation of Mississippians within DSA covered populations. This insight enables BEAM to develop targeted strategies and objectives aimed at addressing the unique needs of Mississippi’s covered populations.

The following graphics depict the covered populations within Mississippi:

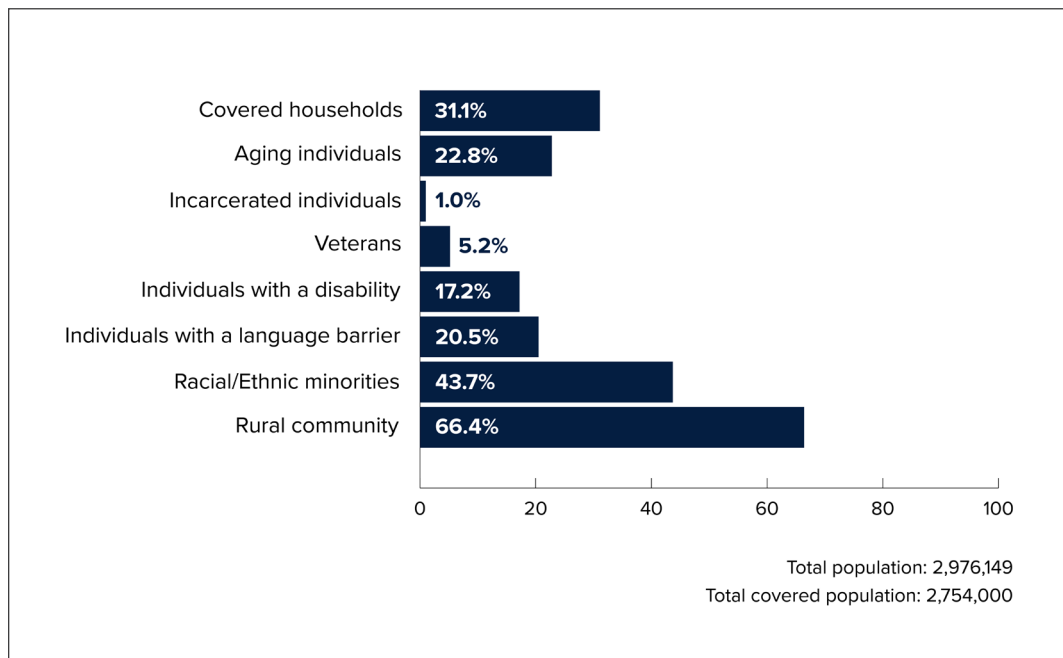


Figure 1: Covered Populations in Mississippi⁴

⁴ <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42>

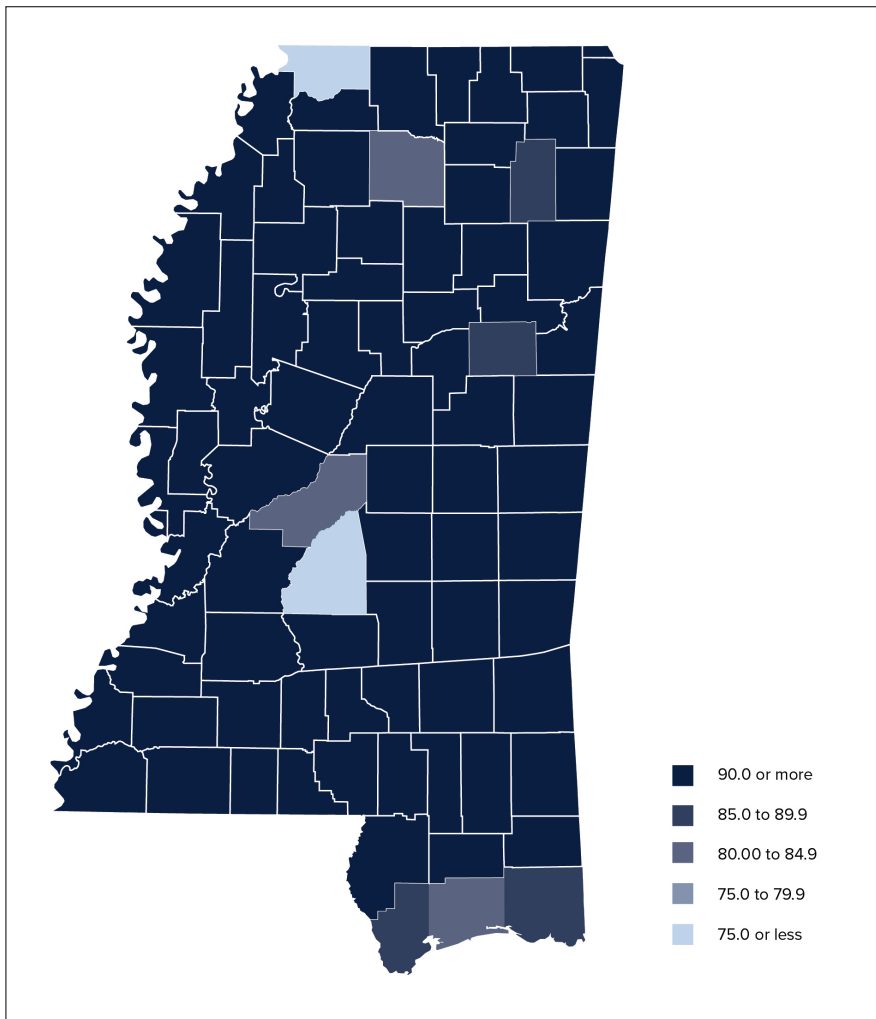


Figure 2: Covered Populations by County⁵

⁵ <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c>

During community engagement sessions and DSA Core Planning Team meetings, BEAM identified common needs among covered populations. While these meetings primarily focused on deployment of service to residential locations, BEAM also recognizes that insufficient broadband access adversely affects business and economic prospects, especially in areas with higher concentrations of covered populations.

Members of covered populations expressed the following concerns:

Covered Households (31.1% of Mississippi's population)

- The cost of internet is too high
- Unable to afford broadband enabled devices
- Understanding plan options through ISPs
- Lack of digital skills

Rural Community (66.4% of Mississippi's population)

- The cost of internet is too high
- Lack of service options
- Lack of digital skills

Aging Individuals (22.8% of Mississippi's population)

- The cost of internet is too high
- Lack of digital skills
- Unable to afford broadband enabled devices
- Lack of cyber security knowledge

Incarcerated Individuals (1.0% of Mississippi's population)

- The cost of internet is too high
- Lack of digital skills
- Lack of devices & access
- Lack of instructors

Veterans (5.2% of Mississippi's population)

- The cost of internet is too high
- Lack of digital skills
- Lack of service options
- Unable to afford broadband enabled devices

Individuals with Disabilities (17.2% of Mississippi's population)

- The cost of internet is too high
- Accessibility issues within website
- Screen readers will not detect if the embedded URL is a scam in turn those who are vision impaired are more susceptible to cyber scams
- Affording assistive technologies
- Lack of digital skills
- Students with disabilities lack assistive technical aids for remote learning

Individuals with a Language Barrier (20.5% of Mississippi's population)

- The cost of internet is too high
- Unable to afford broadband enabled devices
- Lack of digital skills
- Uncertain of eligibility requirements for the ACP

Racial/Ethnic Minorities (43.7% of Mississippi's population)

- The cost of internet is too high
- Unable to afford broadband enabled devices
- Lack of service options
- Unaware of the ACP
- Lack of digital skills

BEAM has recently become aware of ongoing conversations regarding the recycling of outdated Chromebooks by the Mississippi Department of Education. The refurbishment process would be conducted in collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Corrections' MAGCOR program, allowing inmates to acquire skills in device refurbishment. Ultimately, these revitalized devices will be distributed to organizations serving underprivileged communities.

FROM THE COMMUNITY:

“My mother had to see a heart doctor in Jackson. Her heart would go into AFIB, and she was required to wear a heart monitor that was implanted in her chest. We would have to go periodically to Jackson to let them get the readings off of the monitor. Well, every time we went, the readings would not be a clear because the monitor required internet connection. Her service was so bad at her home that we never got any clear readings. She went through the surgery to have it implanted and wore the monitor for two years and, again, never got any clear readings because of the location of her home along with the bad internet service. She had a bad episode with her AFIB and was in route to the ER where she unfortunately passed away.”

3.2.1 BROADBAND ADOPTION AND ACCESS

Frequent connectivity disruptions due to weather, widespread disconnection in some areas and issues with internet quality and device access are notable concerns discussed in the community. These challenges highlight the urgency of addressing broadband infrastructure and access.

The following statements are commonly voiced by attendees during BEAM's community engagement meetings specifically concerning broadband adoption and access:

- Weather conditions frequently disrupt connectivity, causing residents to lose internet access for extended periods.
- Several areas across the state remain entirely disconnected.
- Insufficient internet quality and reliability are key obstacles to accessing high-speed internet, as reported across all covered populations.
- Lack of access to broadband enabled devices leads to individuals not adopting the internet.

3.2.2 BROADBAND AFFORDABILITY

The issue of affordability concerning internet services is a concern that impacts a wide spectrum of individuals in our society. This challenge consistently presents itself as a formidable barrier, which, in turn, hinders their capacity to not only establish an internet connection but also to fully engage with the digital world in a meaningful way.

The following statements are commonly voiced by attendees during BEAM'S community engagement meetings specifically concerning broadband affordability:

- Attendees often have access to only one provider, resulting in a lack of competition and subsequently high internet access costs.
- The cost of internet service frequently hinders citizens from adopting internet, particularly individuals and families on fixed incomes and those with disabilities.

FROM THE COMMUNITY:

“Internet is a vital instrument when a Title Company contracts me to conduct a loan closing for a major bank. I have to download and print the package, which sometimes is 150+ pages. If I don't have internet, the Title Company will find another notary, and I will lose the job. Therefore, I lose money. I need these loan closings more now than ever because I am on Social Security, and even though Social Security is not increasing, everything else is.”

4. Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 COORDINATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

BEAM, has actively sought to engage stakeholders at every phase of the process, harnessing their expertise, insights, contributions and available resources. These stakeholders represent a diverse spectrum, including federal, state and local entities.

As BEAM progresses with the implementation of its comprehensive plan, it maintains its commitment to collaborative efforts. This approach is not only practical but a guiding principle, emphasizing that addressing the digital divide is a collective effort in which all stakeholders play a significant role. By sustaining these collaborative partnerships, BEAM ensures a holistic and inclusive approach to bridging the digital divide, benefiting the people and communities of Mississippi.

BEAM is also one of five ACP Outreach Grant recipients in the state of Mississippi and has begun outreach to other recipients in the state to begin to work together to ensure that all ACP outreach efforts complement one another. It is BEAM's goal, and that of the other ACP grantees, to guarantee that every area of the state is reached by this grant funding to ensure adequate public awareness of affordable broadband options. While BEAM's approach is primarily a media and public awareness campaign, preliminary talks are underway to potentially partner with the other grantees for in-person sign-up events.

BEAM is open to partnering as an ACP Cohort to facilitate signup opportunities. If the ACP terminates, BEAM will continue to promote affordable broadband options and will convene other trusted organizations to create a forum for organizations to discuss strategies around affordability and low cost options.

BEAM will continue meeting with its Core Planning Team and other key stakeholders throughout the capacity grant period of performance to increase transparency and accountability. BEAM will provide progress reports and address issues and concerns that may be raised. BEAM will also provide information on its website, social media, and seek media opportunities whenever possible.

The Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy has been awarded funding from the Digital Equity and Opportunity Initiative to form the Coalition for Digital Accessibility in Mississippi. BEAM serves on the newly created Coalition and consults with the Alliance on many issues related to digital skills and accessibility in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors in order to help address digital skills and accessibility needs in Mississippi.

4.1.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS

To ensure all areas of Mississippi are accounted for and considered in the Mississippi Five-Year Action Plan and Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan, BEAM met with members of communities from across the state to hear from them about the struggles they face. BEAM developed a community engagement plan with the goal of reaching all corners of Mississippi. During these engagement meetings, a presentation was held discussing the goal of the BEAM Office, funding of projects, eligible areas for funding, timeline for universal service and the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Following the presentation, those in attendance were encouraged to ask questions and share their concerns. A notable concern amongst these communities was a fear they still would not have broadband access even with the federal money coming into the state. Other concerns were lack of access to devices and affording both monthly service fees and devices.

Over the course of 11 months, BEAM hosted more than twenty community engagement meetings. Below is a list of these meetings:

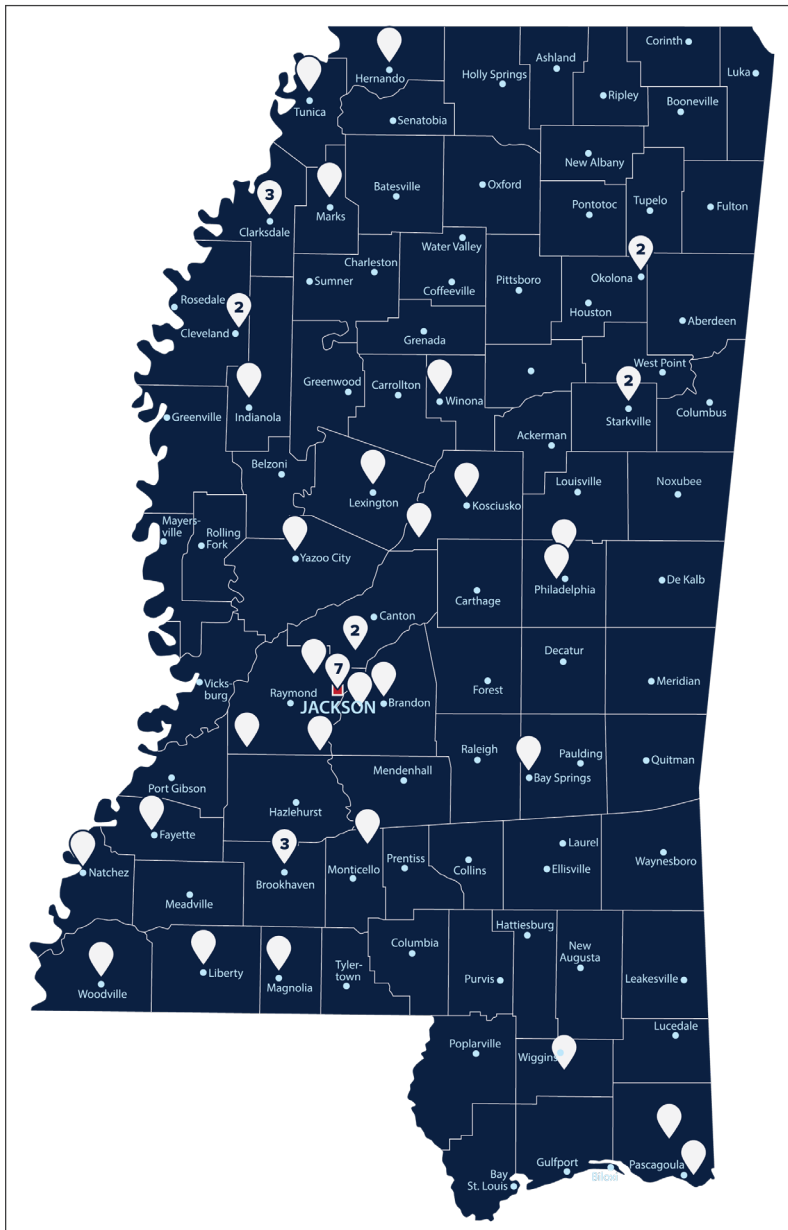


Figure 3: BEAM Community Engagement Map

4.1.2 MASS MEDIA OUTREACH

Through mass media outreach, BEAM is able to reach a larger group, and engage with key stakeholders. These additional means of communication include radio, television, and social media. See page 61 of the state's Five Year Plan for a more comprehensive list.



Figure 4: Mass Media Outreach – Radio and TV

BEAM has also been active on social media, providing and promoting a variety of topics related to broadband including:

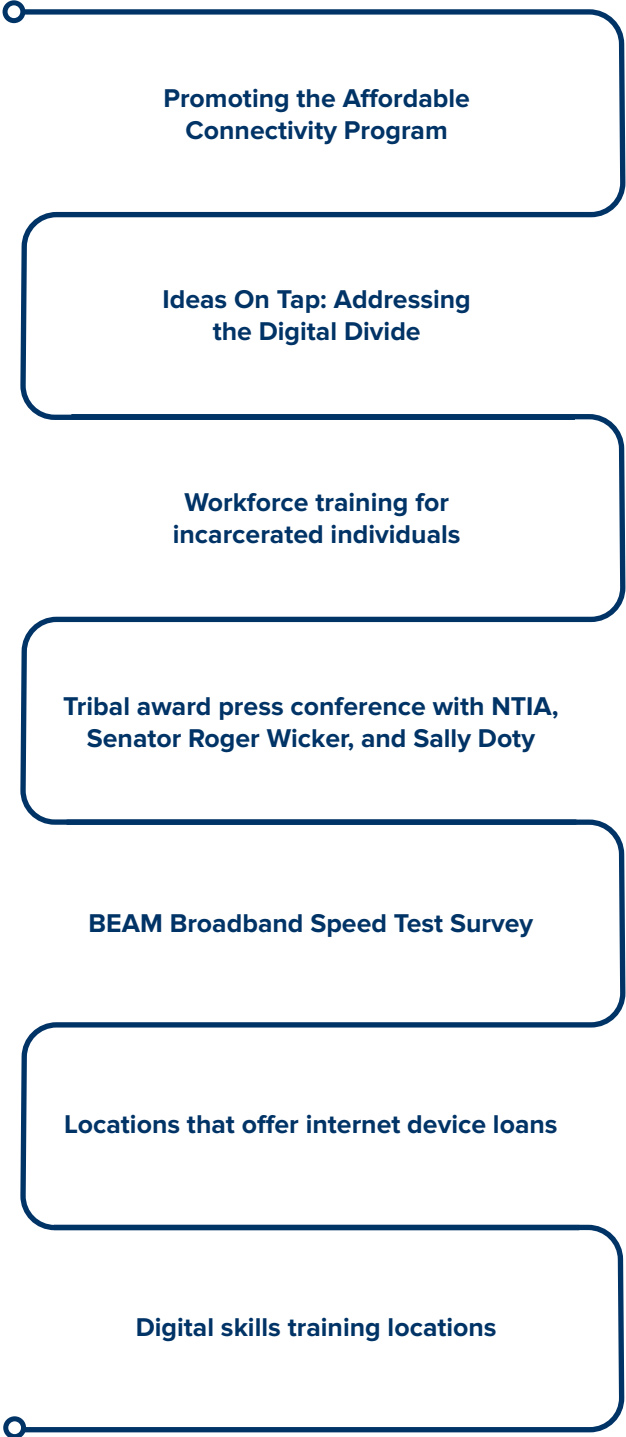


Figure 5: Social Media Outreach

4.1.3 SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Surveys

Surveys are vital in determining the true number of Mississippians without access to reliable broadband. To gather data BEAM conducted the following surveys:

Speed Test

The speed test is an ongoing test allowing BEAM to gather accurate address level data to determine the areas that are unserved, underserved and served. This test is available on broadbandms.com and runs three separate speed tests simultaneously. While speed test data is being gathered, the individual taking the test is asked several questions relating to their home internet plan. These questions include: how many individuals at your home use the internet, what tier of service do you pay for, etc. This additional information allows BEAM to have more accurate data about the broadband needs and broadband availability in the home.

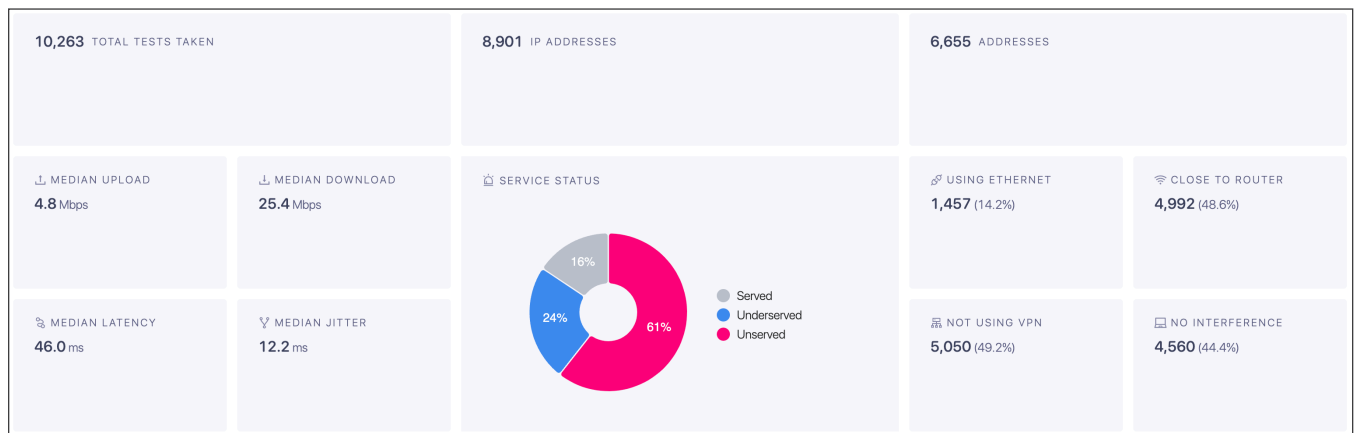


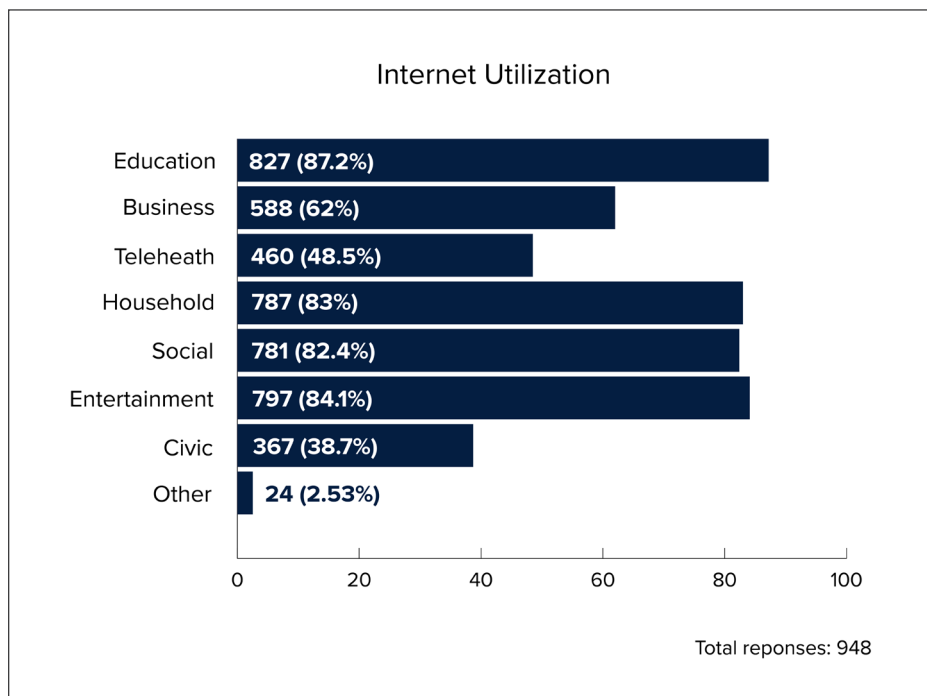
Figure 6: A Broadband Performance Survey. As of November 2023, there were 10,263 performance tests taken via BEAM's speed test portal.

Digital Asset Survey

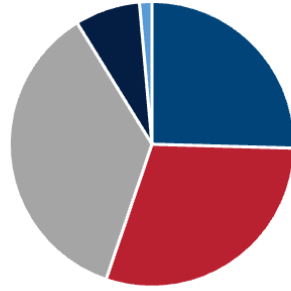
BEAM partnered with Mississippi State University Extension Service to conduct a Digital Asset Survey to catalog any existing digital skills training programs within the state. This survey was distributed to local libraries, schools, nonprofit and internet service providers. This data will be compiled and each digital skills training location will be listed on broadbandms.com for the public to locate any programs in their city or county. The Digital Assets identified as of October 18, 2023, can be found in A.3.

Connectivity Survey

The connectivity survey was created to gather data across the state regarding the barriers to broadband access for an individual’s primary residence, how individuals access the internet (at home, a library, at school, etc.), digital skills knowledge, and basic demographic questions. BEAM partnered with the Mississippi community colleges and public universities in the state to distribute this survey among covered populations as well as their students residing in Mississippi. This survey can be accessed by the public through broadbandms.com.

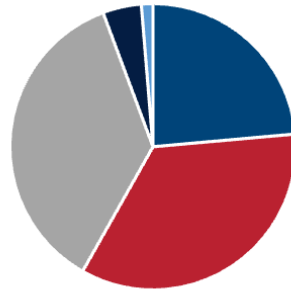


Have you been unable to complete work tasks due to lack of high-speed internet access at home?

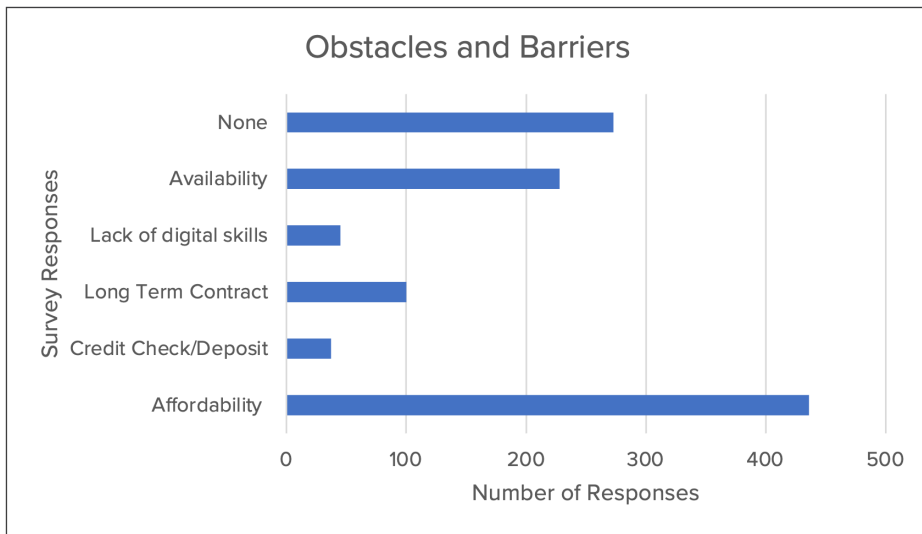
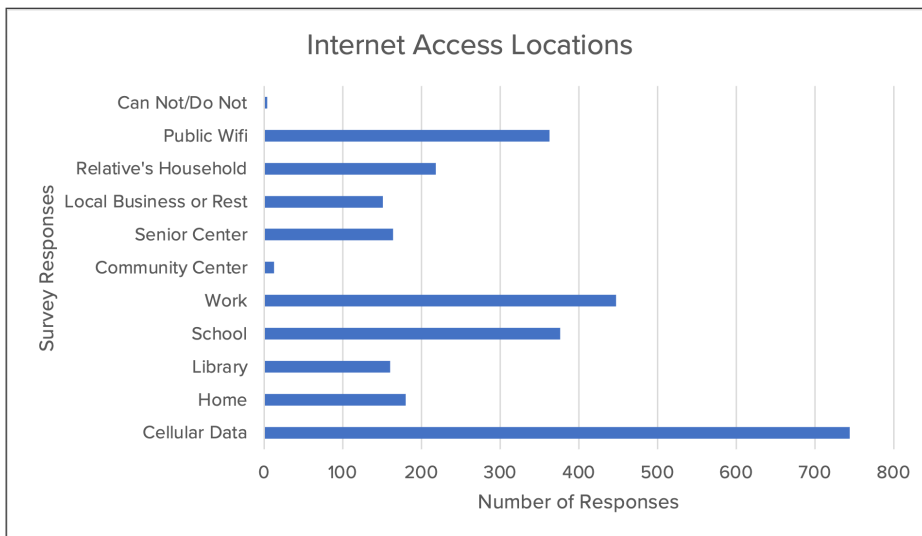
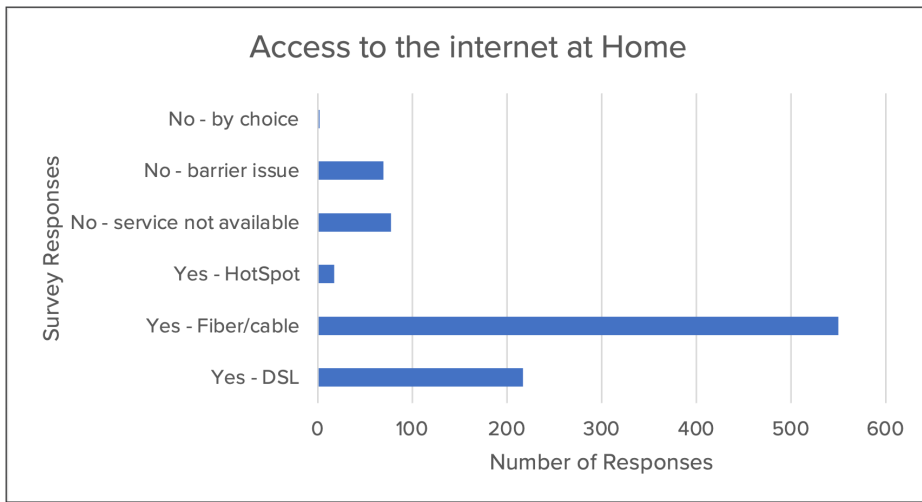


- Yes – Many times (25%)
- Yes – sometimes (29%)
- No – never (36%)
- I do not.... – (7%)
- Other – (3%)

Have you been unable to complete schoolwork due to lack of high-speed internet access at home?



- Yes – Many times (23%)
- Yes – sometimes (34%)
- No – never (36%)
- I do not.... (4%)
- Other – (3%)



Figures 7 – 12: Connectivity Survey Responses

Focus Groups

BEAM recognizes that the race to deploy fiber throughout the state and provide universal service to all Mississippians will require a robust workforce to first deploy and then maintain the newly built fiber network. BEAM has formed close partnerships with and Accelerate Mississippi, the state's workforce development agency, and the 15 community colleges in the state to properly execute this alignment effort.

Internet service providers across the state were invited to attend focus groups held by the community colleges to provide details on what they will require from a workforce in the years to come. This included information on the degrees and certificates employees need to obtain in order to be qualified for these career positions.

Coahoma Community College: 25 attendees

Attendees discussed developing and implementing training programs based on broadband access; specifically training in fiberoptics, networking/network operations, coding, installation, telecommunication, construction, data management and engineering would be the best way to meet the workforce needs required for broadband deployment.

Copiah Lincoln Community College: 39 attendees

Internet service providers expressed their need for more training in workforce classrooms for new hires to have additional knowledge and skills when in the interview phase. Having more training in fiber placement and fiber splicing will be helpful and greatly reduce the time it takes employees to lay out fiber because of the improved coursework students are learning while in the workforce classrooms. This additional training will allow the interviewees to not get overlooked. Attendees expressed workforce training events and training programs is a great way for students to gain experience.

East Central Community College: 17 attendees

In order to build a robust broadband workforce, the participants noted there is a lack in training and programs that teach the skills needed to deploy broadband. The following programs and skills were recommended by the attendees: cable splicing, directional drilling, and basic network skills would all be beneficial.

East Mississippi Community College: 9 attendees

Internet service providers shared they are looking for new hires with experience in fiber splicing, locators, customer service representatives, individuals with savvy PC and router knowledge, and knowledge on vendor specific equipment. The ISPs shared it would be useful to add fiber optic training in the lineman programs so that the new generation of lineman hold knowledge in both electric and fiber work.

Hinds Community College: 24 attendees

The participants discussed soft skills (customer service, etc.), fiber splicing, networking, and cyber security as needed workforce development training. In addition, it would be highly beneficial to have workforce training partnerships and utilize community college programs for training.

Holmes Community College: 6 attendees

The workforce training department's goal is to identify and implement sustainable programs. The workforce development committee noted if they were to develop a fiber-splicing or boring program, Holmes would implement the training in such a way that would provide long-term employment opportunities for individuals who complete the training programs. For these programs to happen, Holmes would need the funds and equipment to start programs related to broadband.

Itawamba Community College: 15 attendees

The attendees discussed a need for workforce training in GIS mapping and fiber splicing with an emphasis on customer service.

Jones County Junior College: 11 attendees

The local ISPs in this area stated a need for fiber premises technician, operations field specialist, construction building and grounds assistant. ISPs also voiced a desire to discuss the availability of students beginning their career search, as a way to do direct hires once individuals complete their training. This can be done prior to graduation to guarantee a strong relationship between individuals completing training and the ISP to see if they will both be a good match upon the individual's completion of the courses.

Meridian Community College: 6 attendees

There is a need for fiber training to be added within utility lineman programs to create a workforce able to keep up with the upcoming demand for broadband deployment. The attendees, which consisted of ISPs, Meridian CC staff, and city workers, all stated it would be of great benefit to attend meetings, as needed, to review and help improve the college curriculum and internships to help meet the needs of the workforce demands.

Mississippi Delta Community College: 20 attendees

The attendees discussed training that would be helpful in building a robust workforce. It was determined installation, customer service, safety, locating, computer networking, Cisco Certifications, and directional drilling were all agreed to be needed to establish a well-trained workforce. Additionally, attendees would like to see opportunities for internships and apprenticeships.

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College: 20 attendees

There is a need to focus on fiber training, but this can be done by leveraging current programs such as Telecommunications Tower Technician training or Lineman training. These skills translate to this field, and these employees may be able to fill these gaps for businesses expanding in this sector. The major barrier to training at the community college is the ability to identify experts in the field who are willing to teach. Community Colleges are often unable to compete with the high wages of industry and the ability to work remotely. The local ISPs stated, currently, there is not a need for an influx of workers in the field; however, it is anticipated that there will need to be fiber installers, fiber splicers, and in-house termination workers soon.

Northeast Mississippi Community College: 22 attendees

In order to support broadband deployment, the workforce needs specific skills. The ISPs in attendance during this focus group stated they are in need of fiber technicians, with solid training on climbing and fiber splicing, NOC technicians, and battery testing. One ISP stated their battery testing is done through a third party and only done once a year. They would like to do this in-house and test quarterly.

Pearl River Community College: 19 attendees

The ISPs shared they are currently training employees internally on fiber splicing due to the lack of skill set in the marketplace. They stated it would be beneficial to have a fiber splicing program, specifically Fiber Broadband Association's Fiber Optic Technician Certification. However, the job outlook is low, therefore, it was suggested apprenticeships would be a good alternative to assist the ISPs in fiber splicing training.

Northwest Community College: 22 attendees

Stakeholders conveyed the need for a gamut of workforce needs to further the broadband infrastructure and implementation efforts taking place in Mississippi. These workforce needs include fiber lineman/technicians, coders, and customer service representatives.

Southwest Mississippi Community College: 39 attendees

With the rapid pace of technological advancement within the broadband industry, colleges face challenges keeping the curricula up to date. This can lead to a workforce lacking specific skills needed and ISPs are having to bridge this gap by offering on-the-job training. Through communication and partnerships between the college and ISPs, this barrier can be addressed through frequent adjustments to training programs to ensure students are learning the latest industry-relevant skills. The ISPs would like to see a fiber optic program and a drilling program added to the curriculum. The college is prepared to partner with Accelerate MS to gain funding to kick off these new programs.

Additionally, BEAM partnered with Mississippi's eight four-year universities; the universities held focus groups on a covered population to determine that group's specific needs and barriers to access. With this information, BEAM is able to create a holistic plan to address the specific needs and barriers within each covered population.

Alcorn State University – Rural and Minorities: 30 attendees

The feedback from the focus group indicates a notable concern regarding limited internet options, with some participants only having access to expensive satellite internet. Affordability is a common issue, as the majority of respondents consider \$50 per month a reasonable price for internet service.

Delta State University – Incarcerated: meeting date TBD

BEAM and DSU plan to jointly organize a focus group in the near future to address issues related to the incarcerated population. However, additional time is needed to properly identify and invite all the necessary key participants.

Jackson State University – Low Income: 27 attendees

Distributing a survey among this covered population, JSU reports much of the research recorded shows a multitude of challenges these individuals face such as affordability of service and devices, slow speed, older devices, and lack of online security measures.

Mississippi State University – Veterans: 11 attendees

Participant barriers to accessing high-speed internet included not having services available at their home (especially if they lived in rural areas), or, having access but not at the speed suitable for their needs. A portion of the focus group discussion was also centered around the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) which is available for Veterans; some shared it was an easy task to sign up for the ACP while others described it as a cumbersome process. The lack of digital skills training was another topic discussed during this focus group.

Mississippi Valley State University - Racial or Ethnic Minorities: 6 attendees

MVSU reported the most common concerns were access to reliable broadband, affordability, and a lack of skills needed to fully utilize the internet and its advantages.

Mississippi University for Women – Rural: 25 attendees

MUW conducted a focus group and determined the rural population would greatly benefit from increased education and assistance in understanding their internet options and the use of internet technology in general.

University of Mississippi – Aging Individuals: 32 attendees

Participants stated that a lack of access to Internet service at home and limited transportation prevents many from going to public places like libraries to access the Internet. Affordability is also a concern within this population; a general consensus is that internet services and digital devices are too expensive. Participants' frustrations regarding their capacity to use the internet and electronic devices cause many to withdraw entirely and not use services even when they are available. There is a desire for workshops and classes to help educate people about how to gain access and utilize their services. Lastly, there was a lot of concern regarding internet scams, phishing links, and credit card information being stolen. Participants did not feel confident they had the ability to detect these scams.

University of Southern Mississippi - Individuals with Disabilities: 20 attendees

Cost and access to broadband is a common barrier within this covered population. Those with disabilities face a specific challenge with affordability; they not only have to pay the monthly service fees but also invest in specialized assistive technology. Often people with disabilities are unaware of the resources/ services that may be available to help them access the internet. Additionally, technological updates pose financial burdens on those with fixed incomes leading to the inability to upgrade their devices every year and support may not be available for older devices.

FROM THE COMMUNITY:

“I would like to install a security system, but with limited satellite internet, it is not an option.”

4.1.4 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

BEAM created the Digital Skills and Accessibility Core Planning Team to better engage and identify key stakeholders and gain insight on the needs of the covered populations in the Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan. The committee meets regularly to ensure outreach is provided and digital skills programs are continually being identified. Below is a listing of committee members and a description of what they do to help reach and serve the covered populations. Below is a listing of committee members and a description of the covered population that they represent.

AARP Mississippi

Kimberly Campbell, State Director for AARP Mississippi, is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all Mississippians as we age. Working to continue to lead positive social and economic change is one of AARP Mississippi's core values. This partnership was designed to collect data on our aging population and identify barriers with our senior community.

Community Foundation of Northwest MS

Tom Pittman, President Emeritus of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi serves on BEAM's Digital Skills & Accessibility Committee. The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi serves 11 counties with a mission of creating positive impacts for children, families, and communities across the state. Provides aid for students to attend college and give students resources that will reduce the barriers they may face. This partnership has helped us identify digital skills programming, build partnerships with community leaders and nonprofits, as well as help identify digital skills programs that community foundations have helped fund.

Kizart Media Partners

Sherman Kizart is a trusted voice in the Mississippi Delta as many know him through his work in radio. Sherman also serves on the Communications Equity & Diversity Council for the Federal Communications Committee. These connections to the Mississippi Delta and the FCC's CEDC have allowed Sherman to provide valuable insight to BEAM for the Digital Skills & Accessibility Plan.

General Missionary Baptist State Committee of Mississippi

Dr. Reginald Buckley is the President of the General Missionary Baptist State Committee (GMBSC) of Mississippi and Pastor of Cade Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Jackson, MS. Dr. Buckley serves on the state Digital Skills & Accessibility Committee to assist BEAM to reach minorities who are unserved and underserved across Mississippi. Thanks to Dr. Buckley, BEAM has been invited to speak at the GMBSC Conference to promote the ACP and other topics related to skills and accessibility.

Hope Credit Union – Policy Insitute

Kiyadh Burt is the Vice President of Policy & Advocacy at HOPE Policy Institute. HOPE Policy Institute works to influence policies that ensure all people prosper. Their main areas of focus include development finance, educational and workforce development, financial inclusion, health and health care, and housing. Kiyadh's partnership has provided work in the MS Delta region identifying barriers with minority and rural communities.

One Shred of Hope

Lauren Compere is a disability advocate and co-founder of One Shred of Hope - a nonprofit that strives to create jobs and accessible, affordable, and integrated housing communities. Lauren has connected BEAM with other advocates within her community and provided insight into potential needs of individuals.

Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy

Jamie Raspberry is the Director of Policy and Strategic Partnerships for the Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy. The Alliance's mission is to serve, build capacity, and foster collaboration among and between Mississippi's nonprofit and philanthropic communities to work to improve the lives of the people and communities of Mississippi. The MLC offers formerly incarcerated individuals education on self-employment resources, hosts programs for families with incarcerated members, and connects incarcerated parents with their children.

Mississippi Department of Corrections

Bradley Lum is the Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Development for the Mississippi Department of Corrections. MDOC offers digital skills and vocational training programs that strengthen inmates' education. This allows the inmates to develop the skills needed to successfully live in their communities once released and preparing parolees for good paying jobs. By matching inmates' skills and certifications with job openings, this partnership has helped BEAM to identify vocations taught at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility, including fiber optics, computer and coding classes, among others.

Mississippi Minority Business Development Agency

Kenny Hunter is the Operator of the Mississippi branch of the Minority Business Development Agency. Kenny is a trusted voice in the minority community and has worked to ensure businesses take advantage of all digital opportunities and advancements. Kenny has a reach that spans much of the state and has enabled BEAM to reach more individuals in the minority community.

Mississippi Library Commission

Jennifer Lena is the Deputy Director of Administrative Services Bureau for the Mississippi Library Commission. BEAM initially reached out to the Library Commission as Mississippi's libraries have already been offering public internet access, use of devices, and even digital skills training. This combined with all 246 libraries in the state now having access to fiber internet service through a state contract has made the Library Commission an ideal digital skills and accessibility partner.

Mississippi Veterans Affairs

Christopher Ellis, Executive Legislative Liaison for Mississippi Veterans Affairs, focuses on providing the best experience possible for Mississippi veteran residents and their families. BEAM has partnered with MSVA to learn about specific needs, particularly telehealth concerns, for the veteran population in Mississippi. Many veterans live in rural areas and have limited digital skills due to a number of factors, such as a lack of service availability or being a member of the aging population. BEAM and MSVA are working together to overcome these barriers.

Mississippi Community College Board

Kell Smith is the Executive Director of the Mississippi Community College Board. Mississippi has 15 community colleges dedicated to serving the state’s educational, training, and workforce needs. Kell has advised BEAM on existing workforce needs and opportunities within the Community College system and how they relate to broadband expansion.

Mississippi Institutes of Higher Learning

Dr. Alfred Rankins, Jr. is the Commissioner of Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning. Mississippi has eight public universities, three of which are Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Dr. Rankins has advised BEAM on existing degree programs and fields of study in secondary education within Mississippi. This includes computer programming, web design, and other related courses.

NTIA

Ty James is Mississippi’s Federal Program Officer with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). NTIA is the federal agency providing funding for the Digital Skills & Accessibility program as well as the Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD) program. Though he is not an official member of the Digital Skills & Accessibility Committee, Ty attends these meetings to advise on federal program requirements and offer insight to the Digital Skills & Accessibility Committee and BEAM.

Mississippi Farm Bureau

Kent Bloodworth is the General Counsel for Mississippi Farm Bureau. Farm Bureau is essential for reaching out to rural populations in areas of Mississippi where agriculture is a primary source of revenue. Connecting individuals in these rural areas to high-speed internet and any digital skills they lack will allow them to make the most of all technology has to offer.

4.1.5 STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

BEAM has built a broad network of partners across Local, State, and Tribal governments and other state agencies since it was established July 1, 2022. BEAM has developed relationships with new and existing stakeholders and used multiple outreach channels to ensure this approach represents all Mississippians, with a particular focus on covered populations.

Local governments have numerous questions about how best to access the large amount of federal funding for broadband flowing to the State of Mississippi so that they can bridge the digital divide within their individual communities. To provide reliable information to address concerns and questions from Mississippians about available funding and services, BEAM facilitates townhall type meetings where BEAM summarizes federal funding programs that will be available to these populations as well as promoting the Affordable Connectivity Program. These targeted local government meetings have proven to be extremely beneficial, as the intimate setting allows for knowledge sharing from BEAM to localities, as well as facilitates honest discussions about specific needs, gaps, and barriers to access in individual communities. Some key points of discussion are: what resources exist to prepare our community for broadband expansion, what if the utility poles cannot support fiber lines, and many other questions regarding make-ready efforts and costs.

BEAM has also met with other State Agencies to discuss broadband needs and potential partnerships. One example was the Broadband Brunch on July 13, 2023. All state agencies were invited to attend this meeting where they were giving an overview of upcoming funding from NTIA. Through these efforts, BEAM identified other agencies with existing digital skills training programs, workforce training programs, and other agencies that serve members of the covered populations listed in this Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan. BEAM hosted a meeting to inform other state agencies of upcoming broadband deployment plans, and find out specific needs for deployment and digital literacy within the state. Agencies such as the Mississippi Department of Public Safety's Division of Homeland Security, the Mississippi Library Commission, the Mississippi Department of Corrections, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Mississippi Child Protective Services, and more were in attendance and their needs for broadband and potential for digital skills training were discussed.

4.1.6 PUBLIC COMMENT

BEAM will coordinate a 30-day public comment period upon completion of the Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan draft. The plan will be posted to BEAM'S website, and the link will be emailed to all relevant stakeholders and BEAM's registered mailing list. Through daily meetings and relationships built in the community, BEAM will continue to spread awareness of the state's Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan.

BEAM will follow statutory and NOFO requirements regarding public comment. Once all comments have been received BEAM has a series of standard operating procedures in place to track, address and respond appropriately to all public comments.

4.1.7 IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

BEAM is committed to maintaining a collaborative partnership with the Digital Skills and Accessibility Core Planning Team to guarantee that all communities receive the essential training required to harness the full potential of the internet.

Specifically, BEAM will work closely with AccelerateMS which is Mississippi's workforce development agency. In addition, BEAM will continue to coordinate with Mississippi's Institutes of Higher Learning; the Mississippi Community College Division of Workforce, Career, Technical, and Adult Education; and the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. These partnerships will lead to the recruitment and training of a sustainable workforce.

BEAM has attended and made presentations at events hosted by the U.S. Department of Commerce Mississippi Minority Business Development Agency Business Center to provide information about the BEAD program and timeline to minority contractors and groups. The director of the MBDA program also serves on the Core Planning Team for the DSA program. Additionally, BEAM responded to requests from the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and engaged in meetings to discuss the skills and training need for broadband expansion. CWA receives regular updates from BEAM on activities through email correspondence and information contained on the BEAM website. BEAM will continue to coordinate with various groups to discuss workforce needs and training opportunities.

BEAM acknowledges the pivotal role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) in Mississippi and will continue to partner with these institutions to reach covered populations. These institutions serve as trusted voices, deeply rooted in their communities, and possess unique insights into the needs of these populations. Collaborating with HBCUs not only amplifies understanding but also facilitates the effective meeting of these needs. Leveraging the influence and reach of HBCUs strengthens BEAM's efforts to ensure broadband accessibility reaches all Mississippians, particularly those in covered populations.

Collaboration and engagement will be a cornerstone of BEAM's strategy. By actively working with these organizations, BEAM aims to streamline their efforts and provide them with the necessary support to ensure that their resources effectively reach every segment of the covered populations. This cooperative approach creates a dynamic network of nonprofits, state agencies, public universities, community colleges, and many other stakeholders, all working together harmoniously to bridge the digital divide and empower the underserved.

This comprehensive plan incorporates the diverse needs and aspirations of the communities it serves. By working closely with the Digital Skills and Accessibility Core Planning Team, conducting needs assessments, developing user-friendly tools, and fostering partnerships with various organizations, BEAM is dedicated to increasing digital skills throughout the state.

5. Implementation

This segment of the plan outlines the implementation approach and potential future initiatives related to each key strategy. Digital opportunity in Mississippi is expected to involve various initiatives corresponding to each strategy. Funding provided by the Federal Infrastructure and Jobs Act (known as the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant) will enhance digital opportunity capacity in Mississippi, as identified by local stakeholders engaged in BEAM’s community outreach over the past year. However, it’s important to note that the success of these initiatives hinges on the availability of resources and awarded funds. Therefore, the potential initiatives are presented as examples, contingent on funding awarded to the state. The amount of funding available to Mississippi or detailed funding requirements are unknown at this time but are expected in mid-2024. With this in mind these strategies were curated to be practical and sustainable avoiding strategies that may be unobtainable due to lack of funding and resources.

BEAM carefully developed these initiatives with a keen eye on practicality, making sure they are not only achievable but also sustainable. By prioritizing actionable and measurable goals, BEAM steers clear of overly ambitious projects that might not be financially or practically feasible.

The Digital Skills and Accessibility Core Planning Team will discuss, assess, and update the DSA Plan based on objective progress, updated NTIA guidance, further data collection, and other meetings with stakeholders as applicable.

As discussed in Volume II, BEAD funds are allocated exclusively for deployment at this time. DSA will be the primary source of funding to reach the states goals; however, any excess funding, after deployment goals are reached, will be expended on activities intended to increase digital skills and accessibility.

5.1 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY & KEY ACTIVITIES

The following are potential strategies and activities to help close the digital divide in Mississippi.

Increase affordable broadband connectivity

Strategy 1 - Ensure all internet service providers who receive BEAD funding provide a low-cost plan for households that qualify for ACP.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Promote the ACP	Promote the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program.
Low-cost Plans	Ensure all grant awardees comply with affordability requirements.

Make broadband enabled devices affordable and accessible.

Strategy 2 - Catalog programs including device donations, lending, and refurbishments.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Promote the ACP	Promote the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program.
Provide information	Offer support, advice, and collaboration opportunities for local areas and nonprofit organizations in their efforts to create and enhance initiatives that grant free devices to families with limited financial resources.

Increase digital literacy programs throughout the state.

Strategy 3 - Make digital literacy training available to all Mississippians, particularly those within all covered populations.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Provide map information	Create digital asset map that will allow the public to locate digital literacy programs near them.
Provide asset information	Update the digital asset inventory to ensure that communities have consistent access to valuable resources.
Provide information	Offer support to the public and relevant stakeholders on cybersecurity information and trainings (if any trainings are identified).
Provide Funding	Provide direct funding to the Mississippi Library Commissions, MSU Extension, Mississippi Community Colleges, Mississippi Department of Corrections, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation, Mississippi Department of Human Services, Mississippi Public Broadcasting and other governmental entities to provide digital navigators and/or training. Provide competitive grant opportunities for nonprofits for digital navigators and/or training.

Online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services.

Strategy 4 - Develop an accessibility standards guide for use by state agencies and local governments and encourage adoption.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Provide digital accessibility standards guide and checklist	Create an accessibility standards guide and checklist and make available to the public.
Provide accessibility information	Encourage state agencies to make their websites and online services accessible to all Mississippians.
Identify units of government lacking online resources	Partner with the Mississippi Municipal League and the Mississippi Association of Supervisors to identify governmental entities who lack online resources for constituents.
Increase online services and resources offered by governmental entities	Leverage funding, partnerships, and other grant opportunities by serving as a resource for governmental entities.

5.2 TIMELINE

Starting from the first quarter of 2024, BEAM will formulate plans to progress towards the execution phase of implementing the goals and objectives outlined in Section 2.3 of this plan. From the second quarter of 2024 until the conclusion of the second quarter of 2028, BEAM will initiate the execution of these goals and objectives by collaborating with organizations already engaged in providing digital skills and accessibility programs. In the third quarter of 2028, BEAM will strive to ensure the achievement of the goals outlined in the state’s Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan.

Please note that the proposed timeline is subject to adjustments based on revised needs and capacity.

Task	2024				2025				2026				2027				2028			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Objective 1.1 Ensure all internet service providers who receive funding from BEAM provide a low-cost plan for households and increase participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program.	SETUP																			
		EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	
																			WIND DOWN	
Objective 1.2 Deploy broadband to all unserved and underserved locations in Mississippi and increase existing and future adoption rates.	SETUP																			
		EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	
																			WIND DOWN	
Objective 2.1 Catalog programs including device donations, lending, and refurbishments.	SETUP																			
		EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	
																			WIND DOWN	
Objective 3.1 Make digital literacy training available to all Mississippians, particularly those within all covered populations.	SETUP																			
		EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	
																			WIND DOWN	
Objective 4.1 Develop an accessibility standards guide for agencies and encourage agencies to adopt.	SETUP																			
		EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	EXECUTION	
																			WIND DOWN	

KEY: SETUP EXECUTION WIND DOWN

6. Conclusion

Through the Mississippi State Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan, the BEAM office has identified barriers to access, gaps and skills, and identified partners to move forward with implementation. BEAM will focus on all listed covered populations for the state of Mississippi. Through current and future partnerships with stakeholders throughout the state, BEAM will be able to assist in workforce development efforts to create a substantial workforce capable of maintaining these newly developed fiber networks. These partnerships will speed up broadband adoption and the advancement of digital skills and accessibility.

BEAM's goal for every Mississippian to have access to affordable and reliable internet is no easy task but is made possible through their partnerships with key stakeholders throughout the state and specific, measurable goals stated in the Digital Skills and Accessibility Plan. BEAM will continuously work towards new partnerships and programs to ensure all citizens of the state have access to the skills, trainings, and affordable programs that will shepherd all Mississippians into the 21st century and pave the way for new opportunities.

Appendices

A.1 DIGITAL SKILLS PROGRAMS

AARP Mississippi

AARP Mississippi empowers people to choose how they live as they age, and works to continue to lead a positive social and economic change to all aging Mississippians. See additional information about AARP Mississippi in section 4.1.4.

AT&T

AT&T Connected Learning Centers, situated in local nonprofits, offer complimentary resources for students and families. These resources include high-speed internet, computers, tutoring, and mentoring.

Basecamp Coding Academy

BCCA is a hands-on, challenging, and fun program designed to train recent high school graduates to be software engineers. In an intimate classroom setting, students work with real world technologies to learn the fundamentals of coding, app development and the life leadership skills they will need to be successful in their career and competitive in the job market upon graduation.

The Bean Path

The Bean Path is a nonprofit focusing on bridging the tech gap in communities. They offer free tech hours at local libraries with technical mentoring and guidance for individuals and start-ups.

Callaway High School

Partners with Microsoft TechSpark to create an academy of information technology. Microsoft TechSpark is a Microsoft Philanthropies program that works with local partners to ensure communities and students can participate in and benefit from the opportunities presented by growing the digital economy. This career academy at Callaway High School provides a college-preparatory curriculum with a career and technical focus. It prepares students for the workforce by offering hands-on experience.

Internet Essentials Learning Center

Comcast Internet Essentials Learning Centers are community spaces that offer internet access, digital skills training, and educational resources to bridge the digital divide. They provide support to individuals and families who may lack internet access or digital literacy skills, aiming to help them participate more fully in the digital world.

East Central Community College

East Central Community College is offering a Microsoft Productivity Tools class to the Choctaw tribe employees. These classes cover how to effectively use Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Forms, Microsoft OneNote, and Microsoft Teams, and how to manage and share files using One Drive for Business.

Genesis and Light Center

The Genesis and Light Center seeks to enhance Mississippi's talent pool by improving K-12 science and mathematics education, reinforcing teachers' proficiency through supplementary training in science, mathematics, and technology, and expanding the pool of students who are well-prepared to pursue college education and earn STEAM degrees.

Issac Chapel Rosenwald School

One of the few surviving Rosenwald Schools in Mississippi which was constructed nearly a century ago. This is an Educational Center teaching digital skills to African American high school students. The goal of this educational center is to provide significant advancements in digital literacy in African American education.

Mississippi Coding Academy

Mississippi Coding Academy aims to provide an alternative path for cultivating a diverse group of software professionals and enhancing economic prospects for Mississippi residents, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and underserved communities.

Meridian Community College

Meridian Community College offers resources for digital skills training and technical support services, and provides public access to digital devices and broadband internet.

Mississippi Broadband Association Connect and Literacy Program

This fund is designed to address affordable access, digital skills training, and device ownership across Mississippi and plans to launch their first pilot program in the beginning of 2024.

Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce supports and applies necessary regulations to agricultural-related businesses within the state and promotes Mississippi's products throughout both the state and the rest of the world for the benefit of all Mississippi citizens.

Mississippi Department of Corrections

Mississippi Department of Corrections protects and promotes public safety primarily through the efficient and effective custody and control of individuals convicted and sentenced for felony crimes. Mississippi Department of Corrections offers digital skills and vocational training programs that strengthen inmates' education. See additional information in section 4.1.4.

Mississippi Department of Education

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) provides resources and technical support to Mississippi's public school system. MDE oversees the Mississippi Connects Program to provide every child with a computer or device to use for educational purposes. BEAM will continue partnering with MDE to determine needs within their digital skills programs.

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

Mississippi Department of Rehab has been identified for offering programs ranging from basic computer literacy, specialized devices for accessible computer access, and even device lending for those with disabilities.

Mississippi Farm Bureau

Mississippi Farm Bureau is essential for reaching out to rural populations in areas of Mississippi where agriculture is a primary source of revenue. See additional information in section 4.1.4.

Mississippi Head Start

MHSA's mission is to provide comprehensive services in education, child development, health, nutrition, and parent engagement to Mississippi children and families. They emphasize core values of wellness, cultural respect, diversity, family empowerment, and community development, all while building upon the strengths of families and communities.

Mississippi Housing and Urban Development Department

BEAM is having ongoing conversations with the Mississippi Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) regarding existing programming and needs for individuals who utilize HUD's services.

Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance

MIRA is a formal coalition of immigrant and non-immigrant groups that formed in the Fall of 2000 in response to the needs of the rapidly growing, largely Latino immigrant population in Mississippi. This organization works to educate immigrants and allied communities to navigate many aspects of life in a country where many immigrants do not speak the local language.

Mississippi Library Commission

The Mississippi Library Commission offers a wide variety of direct and indirect services to libraries, government agencies and the citizens of Mississippi. The Mississippi Library Commission offers public internet access, use of devices, and digital skills training. See additional information in section 4.1.4.

Mississippi School for the Blind & Deaf

Mississippi School for the Blind & Deaf provides educational and residential services to students across Mississippi who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf/blind.

Mississippi Veterans Affairs

The State Veterans Affairs Board, MSVA, is charged with the responsibility to care for each Veteran and/or their dependents at the highest possible level of care and service. No other state agency is tasked with the comprehensive care of Mississippi's Veteran community. Whether recently separated or their service occurred decades ago, the MSVA seeks to meet their needs at the point of life they come into contact with MSVA. The MSVA offers veterans broadband-enabled devices for those in need, as well as accessibility devices for veterans requiring digital assistive technology.

PeopleShores PBC

PeopleShores' mission is to create a meaningful impact in underserved communities across the United States. They aim to establish a top-tier technology and technology-enabled services enterprise with a specific focus on enhancing the livelihoods of socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Their primary goal is to enable these individuals to pursue "family-sustainable" careers.

A.2 Affordable Connectivity Provider List

BROADBAND PROVIDER NAME	BROADBAND SERVICE TYPE	OFFERING CONNECTED DEVICES (LAPTOP, DESKTOP, OR TABLET)?
IJ WIRELESS	Fixed and Mobile Broadband	Yes
Culture Wireless Group, LLC	Fixed and Mobile Broadband	Yes
Cajun Broadband Inc	Fixed Broadband	Yes
DJ ROB Enterprises	Fixed Broadband	Yes
Figgers Communication Inc.	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
Catnect Communications, Inc	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
SWA Connect, LLC	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
Clear Mobile, LLC	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
Daillytel Inc.	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
Culture Wireless LLC	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
Great Wireless, LLC	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
Tone Communication Services LLC	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
Maxsip Telecom Corporation	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
City Communications, Inc	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	Yes
VOLT MOBILE INC.	Mobile Broadband	Yes

Zefcom, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
NatWireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Liberty Mobile Wireless	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Heritage Wireless Group, Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Galaxy Distribution LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
GO MD USA LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Excellus Communications, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Loveis Corp	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Unity Wireless, Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Prosper Wireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Wrizzle, Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes
AFNET, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Broadway Telecom LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Sarver Corporation	Mobile Broadband	Yes
North American Local, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
AirVoice Wireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Hoop Wireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
ALLDATA COMMUNICATIONS CORP.	Mobile Broadband	Yes

Comlink Total Solutions Corp	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Wireless Brands Co	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Whoop Connect Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Insight Mobile, Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes
LTE Wireless	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Integrated Path Communications, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Rogue Mobile Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Imcon International Inc. dba Rural 4G	Mobile Broadband	Yes
K20 Wireless	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Easy Telephone Service Company	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Cintex Wireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Excess Telecom, Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Assurance Wireless	Mobile Broadband	Yes
SurgePhone Wireless LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Dish Wireless LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Global Connection Inc. of America	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Selectel, Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes
TracFone Wireless Inc.	Mobile Broadband	Yes

Q Link Wireless LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
PCs for People	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Sage Telecom Communications, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Boomerang Wireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	Yes
human-I-T	Mobile Broadband	Yes
Space Exploration Technologies Corp.	Fixed Broadband	No
Singing River Connect, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Northcentral Connect, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Windstream Communications, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
We Connect Communications, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Synergy Communications LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Viasat, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Arvig Enterprises, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Sledge Telephone Company	Fixed Broadband	No
Mediacom LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
NT Spark, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
East Mississippi Connect, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Spectrum (Charter Communications Operating, LLC)	Fixed Broadband	No

Tallahatchie Valley Internet Services, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Matrix Telecom, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Frontier Communications Corporation	Fixed Broadband	No
M-Pulse Fiber, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
First Light Fiber, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
DE Fastlink, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Tishomingo Connect, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Prentiss Electric Broadband, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
TecInfo Communications, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
End-User Computing	Fixed Broadband	No
Tombigbee Fiber, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Hughes Network Systems, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
North East Fiber, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Mobile Communications, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Aristotle Unified Communications	Fixed Broadband	No
LUMEN Technologies, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Mound Bayou Telephone & Communications, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Fulton Telephone Company, Inc	Fixed Broadband	No

Bruce Telephone Company, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Franklin Telephone Co., Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Bay Springs Telephone Company, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
TDS Telecommunications Corporation	Fixed Broadband	No
TEC of Jackson, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
CoastConnect, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
BCI Mississippi Broadband, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Uplink	Fixed Broadband	No
TEPA Connect, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
4-County Fiber, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Smithville Telephone Company, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
Fidelity Cablevision, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Delta Fiber, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Vicksburg Video, Inc	Fixed Broadband	No
BellSouth Telecommunications Inc	Fixed Broadband	No
Belzoni Cable, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No
Decatur Telephone Company	Fixed Broadband	No
CableSouth Media III, LLC	Fixed Broadband	No

Earthlink, LLC	Fixed Broadband	
Telepak Networks, Inc.	Fixed Broadband	No
CSC Holdings, LLC	Fixed Broadband and Mobile Broadband	No
Comcast Cable Communications, LLC	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	No
DIRECT DEALS CORP	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	No
Building Our Future Communications, Inc.	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	No
Cellco Partnership	Fixed Broadband or Mobile Broadband	No
Public Wireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	No
Z1 Wireless	Mobile Broadband	No
i-wireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	No
Sano Health LLC	Mobile Broadband	No
Hello Mobile Telecom LLC	Mobile Broadband	No
Metro by T-Mobile	Mobile Broadband	No
IDT Domestic Telecom, Inc.	Mobile Broadband	No
IM Telecom, LLC	Mobile Broadband	No
Foundation for California Community Colleges	Mobile Broadband	No
Go Technology Management, LLC	Mobile Broadband	No
UVNV, Inc.	Mobile Broadband	No

Ready Wireless, LLC	Mobile Broadband	No
Cellular South Licenses, LLC	Mobile Broadband	No
Ztar Mobile, Inc	Mobile Broadband	No
Telrite Holdings Inc	Mobile Broadband	No
AT&T Mobility LLC	Mobile Broadband	No

Source: [Federal Communications Commission](#)

A.3 Digital Assets Identified by Mississippi State University Extension

All information in A.3 was provided directly from the organizations offering these services.

<p>"What is your organization's name?"</p> <p>Name of the organization offering digital skills services"</p>	<p>"What is the website for your organization?"</p> <p>Please provide the URL link."</p>	<p>"What languages are supported by your organization (other than English)?"</p> <p>Languages in which digital skills services are offered by the organization"</p>	<p>"Does your organization focus their digital skills efforts on serving any historically underserved groups?"</p> <p>Please select all that apply - Selected Choice"</p>	<p>"What is the primary issue focus of your organization?"</p> <p>Please select all that apply - Selected Choice"</p>	<p>"What categories of digital skills services does your organization provide?"</p> <p>Please select all that apply"</p>	<p>Does your organization provide new digital devices, refurbished digital devices, or both?"</p>
Mississippi State university Extension	MSU-ES.com	n/a	Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Rural Residents, Veterans, Youth	Education	"Broadband Access and Affordability Connecting households to home broadband service, Device Access Helping people access affordable personal digital devices"	Refurbished Digital Devices Only
MSU Extension Office	n/a	English	No, our organization does not target any underserved groups	Other	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	
PeopleShores PBC	https://peopleshores.com/	English only	Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Rural Residents, Veterans	Other	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	

Mississippi Community College Board	www.mccb.edu	N/A	No, our organization does not target any underserved groups	Education	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	
Mississippi Library Commission	www.mlc.lib.ms.us	all	English Language Learners, Incarcerated Persons, Persons with Disabilities	Other	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
The University of Southern Mississippi	usm.edu/computing	none currently	Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Rural Residents, Veterans	Education	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	
Mississippi Veterans Affairs	www.ms.va.gov	N/A	Incarcerated Persons, Persons with Disabilities, Veterans	Community Development, Education, Health, Homelessness, Housing, Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	

Meridian Community College	www.meridiancc.edu	spanish, etc.	English Language Learners, Incarcerated Persons, Low-Income Households, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Veterans, Youth	Education	"Device Access Helping people access affordable personal digital devices, Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	Both New and Refurbished Digital Devices
Monroe County Electric Power Association	monroe-countyelectric.com	English	No, our organization does not target any underserved groups	Other	"Broadband Access and Affordability Connecting households to home broadband service"	
Northeast MS Community College	www.nemcc.edu	English	English Language Learners, Incarcerated Persons, Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Rural Residents, Veterans, Youth	Education, Workforce/ Job Training	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	

AT&T	ATT.com	All languages commonly used throughout the U.S.	English Language Learners, Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities	Community Development, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Education, Health	"Broadband Access and Affordability Connecting households to home broadband service, Device Access Helping people access affordable personal digital devices, Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Digital Inclusion Funding, Funding digital inclusion work"	Both New and Refurbished Digital Devices
Mississippi Library Commission	www.mlc.lib.ms.us	Spanish, German	No, our organization does not target any underserved groups	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Kemper-Newton Regional Library Syst	knrls.lib.ms.us	n/a	Immigrants or Refugees, Incarcerated Persons, Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Rural Residents, Veterans, Youth	Community Development, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Education	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	

Benton County Library System	benton.lib.ms.us	Only English	Other	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Columbus-Lowndes Public Library System	www.lowndeslibrary.com	English, Spanish	Other	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Laurel-Jones County Library System	www.laurel.lib.ms.us	Spanish	English Language Learners, Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Rural Residents, Veterans, Youth	Community Development, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Education	"Device Access Helping people access affordable personal digital devices, Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"	Both New and Refurbished Digital Devices

Tallahatchie County Library	https://tallahatchie.lib.ms.us/	N/A	English Language Learners, Immigrants or Refugees, Incarcerated Persons, Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Rural Residents, Veterans, Youth, Other	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Dixie Regional Library System	dixie.lib.ms.us	none	Other	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Hancock County Library System	www.hcls.info	none	Other	Other	"Device Access Helping people access affordable personal digital devices, Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services,Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"	Both New and Refurbished Digital Devices

Waynesboro-Wayne County Library	www.wwcls.lib.ms.us	N/A	Other	Education	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
MSU Extension Center for Technology Outreach	http://extension.msstate.edu/extension-center-for-tech-outreach	N/A	Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Rural Residents, Veterans	Community Development, Education	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	
Washington County Library System	https://www.washington.lib.ms.us	none	English Language Learners, Low-Income Households, Older Adults, Rural Residents	Community Development, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Education	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"	
Mississippi Coding Academies	www.mscoading.org	English	English Language Learners, Immigrants or Refugees, Incarcerated Persons, Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Rural Residents, Veterans, Youth	Community Development, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Education, Labor/Worker's Rights, Workforce/Job Training	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	

Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System	https://mid-misslib.com/	We have one staff member who is fluent in Spanish.	Other	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Bolivar County Library System	www.bolivar.lib.ms.us	none	Other	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Lincoln Lawrence Franklin Regional Library	www.lf.lib.ms.us	none	No, our organization does not target any underserved groups	Education	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Elizabeth Jones Library	www.elizabeth.lib.ms.us	none	Low-Income Households, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Rural Residents, Youth	Education	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"	
South Mississippi Regional Library	https://sm-rlcolumbia.wixsite.com/mslibrary	None	Other	Other	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	

Harrison County Library System	www.harrison.lib.ms.us	English, with Spanish-speakers at two branches	Other	Other	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"
Carnegie Public Library-Clarksdale & Coahoma County	https://www.cplclarksdale.lib.ms.us	Spanish	English Language Learners, Youth	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"
Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System	https://mid-misslib.com/	We have one staff member who is fluent in Spanish and assists patrons as needed. We also use technological tools to attempt to serve all who speak languages other than English.	Other	Other	"Broadband Access and Affordability Connecting households to home broadband service"
Madison County Library System	www.mc-lsms.org	None	Other	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"

Northeast Regional Library System	www.nereg.lib.ms.us	some Spanish	Other	Other	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"	
Choctaw County Library System	https://choctaw.biblionix.com/catalog/	english	Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups ,Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Rural Residents, Youth	Education	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"	
Bean Path	https://www.thebean-path.org	English	Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Rural Residents, Youth	Community Development, Workforce/ Job Training, Other	"Broadband Access and Affordability Connecting households to home broadband service, Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services"	

Sunflower County Library System	https://www.sunflower.lib.ms.us	Spanish	Other	Other	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"
Sunflower County Library System	https://www.sunflower.lib.ms.us	Spanish	Other	Other	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"
Sunflower County Library System	https://www.sunflower.lib.ms.us	Spanish	Other	Other	"Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services, Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access"

Sunflower County Library System	https://www.sunflower.lib.ms.us	Spanish	Other	Other	“Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access”
Sunflower County Library System	https://www.sunflower.lib.ms.us	Spanish	Other	Other	“Digital Skills and Technical Support Offering digital skills training resources or technical support services Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly available digital devices and broadband access”
Genesis and Light Center	http://www.genesisand-lightcenter.com/	N/A	English Language Learners, Low-Income Households, Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Persons with Low Literacy Levels, Veterans, Youth	Community Development, Education	"Public Device and Internet Access Providing publicly-available digital devices and broadband access"

A.4 Mississippi Broadband Association

