



Bridging the Divide

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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With this support, Mid-Carolina Regional Council was able to create a digital inclusion plan that member governments can utilize in the implementation of their programs.

Mid-Carolina Regional Council thanks all partners involved for their support throughout the creation of this plan. This includes the following agencies, as well as member governments for their continued partnership and participation.

North Carolina State University's Office of Institute for Emerging Issues

Cumberland County

Cumberland County Council on Older Adults

Cumberland County Department of Public Health

Cumberland County Office of Veterans Affairs

Cumberland County Public Library

Harnett County

Harnett County Aging

Harnett County Department of Public Health

Harnett County Information Technology

Harnett County Public Library

Harnett County Public Schools

Harnett County Office of Veterans Affairs

North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Sampson County Center

Sampson County

Sampson County Aging Services

Sampson County Economic Development

Sampson County Health Department

Sampson County Public Library

Sampson County Schools

Sampson County Veteran Services

Coharie Tribe

Star Communications

ABSTRACT

To facilitate conversations, begin partnerships, and gather comprehensive asset and needs information to support community members, local governments, organizations, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), and other stakeholders to eliminate the digital divide within the Mid-Carolina region.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In 2024, Mid-Carolina Regional Council (MCRC), in conjunction with North Carolina State University's Institute for Emerging Issues, has developed a Digital Inclusion Plan that will serve as a resource for Cumberland, Harnett, and Sampson County officials in bridging the digital divide and moving towards digital equity for residents in the region.

Regional Overview

Mid-Carolina Regional Council consists of 24 member governments, located throughout Cumberland, Harnett, and Sampson counties. The region is considered to be part of the Sandhills Region of North Carolina. The region consists of 21-member municipal governments, and 3-member county governments. The region-wide population is approximately 538,968.

Purpose

The purpose of this plan was to create a foundation for collaboration to leverage scale effects and resources needed to address broadband infrastructure and digital inclusion needs across the region. Mid-Carolina Regional Council, along with each member county, has evaluated broadband access that is currently in place for residents and identified gaps in services. Through the identification of access and needs, this plan was developed to identify goals to help the region address each aspect of Digital Inclusion and create tactical action objectives that correlate with the priorities identified.

Planning Process

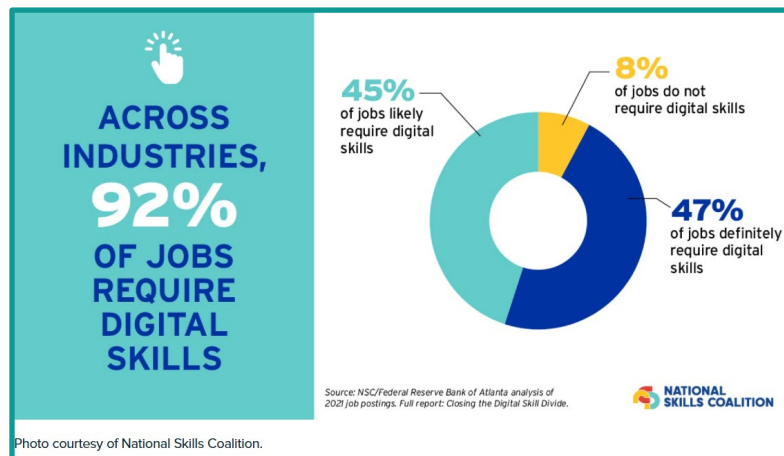
In developing the digital inclusion plan, Mid-Carolina Regional Council sought to obtain input from officials and stakeholders of all three member counties. As such, Mid-Carolina created three steering committees, one for each County, to cultivate deeper geographic discussions on digital inclusion, and identify county-specific goals and objectives. The steering committees met twice over the development of the plan. The first meetings were held in June 2024 to kick-off the project and start discussions pertaining to digital inclusion gaps. This was also an opportunity to gauge each county's existing conditions as they pertain to digital access and inclusion. The second meetings were held in

August 2024 to discuss public engagement opportunities and to identify goals and strategies to improve the digital equity in the region.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is the Digital Divide?

Across industries, 92% of jobs require digital skills. Nearly every aspect of society interacts with the internet in some capacity, through everyday appliances – like lights and refrigerators – to complex health care systems and records. As such, North Carolinians encounter the internet daily. While opportunities created by the internet increase, so do inequities for those who do not have access to the technologies, tools, and skills needed to participate in the increasingly digital world.



Retrieved from [The Majority of Jobs Now Require Digital Skills, Study Finds \(govtech.com\)](https://govtech.com)

These inequities have led to a **digital divide**. The digital divide is the gap between those who have access to technology, the internet and digital literacy training and those who do not. The impacts can be felt through all generations, in both rural and urban communities, and across a wide variety of industries and sectors.

Who Is Affected by the Digital Divide?

The Digital Equity Act programs seek to empower populations that are most affected by the digital divide. These populations are referred to as “Covered Populations”. These groups include:

1. *Individuals who live in Covered Households (defined as households with income from the most recently completed year of not more than 150% of the poverty level);*
2. *Aging individuals;*
3. *Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility;*
4. *Veterans;*
5. *Individuals with disabilities;*
6. *Individuals with a language barrier, including English learners and those with low levels of literacy;*
7. *Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and*
8. *Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.*

In addition to the “covered population” identified by the Digital Equity Act, Mid-Carolina has identified the following groups in our region for whom we aim to close the digital divide.

- School age children – If children do not have access to internet and computers, this can result in the inability to properly complete homework (i.e. the Homework Gap) as more schools are relying upon digital access for learning opportunities. Additionally, the lack of routine access to the internet and computers can put children at a disadvantage in the development of their digital skills.
 - The Homework Gap is defined as the gap that occurs when children are assigned homework requiring internet access but do not have home access to complete these assignments.
- Senior Adult Population – Individuals who did not have the opportunity to grow up with the technology in use today are at a disadvantage. Although many senior adults are frequent users of information and communication technologies (ICTs), many still lack access and/or training, and the pace of digital innovation is yet to be inclusive of their needs. Many seniors also lack suitable digital devices and technical

training and support, leaving them without critical information about cybersecurity and staying safe online.

- Workforce & Employers - The rapid pace at which technology and required technology skills are advancing in the workplace is leaving behind workers without digital skills, access to the internet and computing devices. It's also having an impact on businesses efficiency and competitiveness.
- Health Care Patients - With the rise of telehealth services as viable options for contacting health care providers, individuals without access to broadband and computing devices will lack access to these additional tools.
- Residents - Government entities are increasingly offering services online, and those without access to broadband and computing devices cannot access those services or participate in community activities that require access.
- Reentry population - As society evolves and becomes heavily dependent on technology, formerly incarcerated individuals are often excluded from being active citizens due to the digital divide.
 - Once formerly incarcerated individuals enter their parole period, they may find it difficult to meet the requirements of parole, such as finding employment, securing housing, and applying for government services, due to their lack of experience navigating email or using computer applications (Reisdorf & DeCook, 2022).
- Migrant Farmworker - Agricultural workers experience the rurality of the digital divide while distinctively enduring a highly dangerous occupation with agricultural exceptionalism leading to structurally vulnerable housing, poverty, and reduced labor protections. The rural isolation is magnified by limited transportation, economic instability, language barriers, racial and ethnic disparities, education, and cultural differences.
 - Without access to the internet or cell service, agricultural workers and their families are excluded from critical support services such as emergency communications and telemedicine. In addition, the inaccessibility to online information, social connections, and education prohibits self-efficacy, participation in society, and overall emotional well-being.

- Unhoused population - The internet can be invaluable for unhoused individuals, as they can use it to find employment, access government services, connect with friends and family, and find available housing. However, without permanent housing, they cannot subscribe to home internet service and must look for connectivity elsewhere.

Closing the Digital Divide

While the digital divide is a challenge, there are solutions that exist. The digital divide can be closed by implementing digital inclusion policies, programs and tools that incorporate the following:

- Affordable, robust broadband internet service.
- Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user.
- Access to digital literacy training.
- Quality technical support.
- Applications and online content are designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

While this plan takes a local approach to identification of goals and strategies to closing the digital divide, it is also important to highlight that the efforts must extend beyond jurisdictional bounds and include state and federal partners to achieve success.

In 2023, the State of North Carolina has awarded several grants resulting in over \$4 million dollars to assist in the closing of the digital divide through utilization of the state's Digital Navigator Initiative, which utilized federal ARPA funds. The following institutions were awarded:

- The State Library of North Carolina has received \$1.3 million for the creation of digital navigation services at libraries with the intention to hire regional digital inclusion facilitators and a digital inclusion coordinator to assist participating public and tribal libraries statewide.
- The North Carolina Community College System has received \$1.3 million to deploy trained digital navigators at 20 community colleges serving Tier 1 and 2 counties, create a Spanish and English version of the Digital Navigator Certificate, and recruit adults from communities most impacted by the digital divide to serve as digital navigators.

- The North Carolina Cooperative Extension has received \$1.3 million to hire digital literacy and skills extension agents in participating counties and train existing extension agents to host digital literacy and skills educational opportunities in their communities.

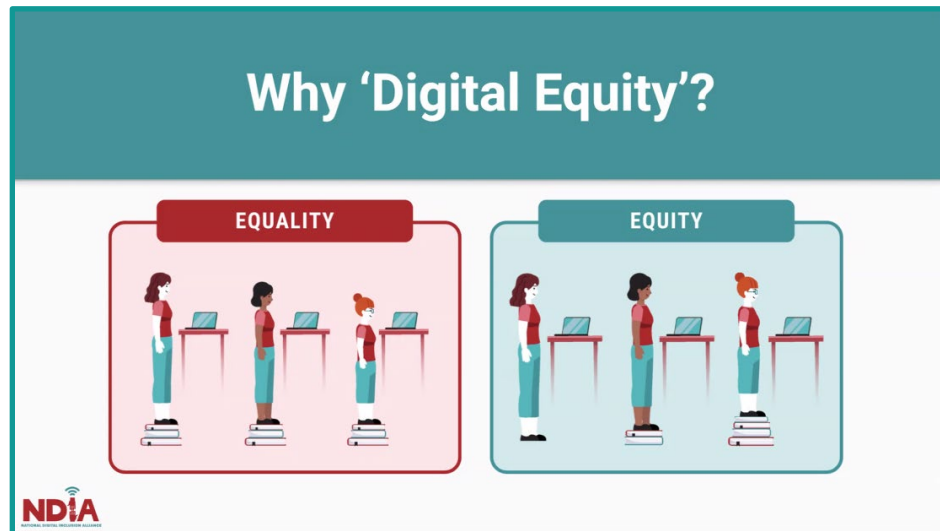
Digital Equity

The Division of Broadband and Digital Equity is working to achieve digital equity throughout North Carolina to fully close the digital divide. **Digital equity** is a

condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in society, democracy and economy. It is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning and access to essential services. To achieve digital equity, it means that every North Carolinian would have the technologies, tools and skills needed to access affordable high-speed internet anywhere, anytime.

Digital Inclusion

The achievement of digital equity requires the design, implementation and support of digital inclusion programs. **Digital inclusion** is the pursuit to ensure that all persons and communities regardless of their socioeconomic status, demographic, or geographic area have unrestricted access to affordable high-speed internet, an adequate and unrestricted device to use it, and the appropriate and applicable technological support to troubleshoot and learn. This pursuit is grounded in the belief that highspeed broadband is essential for all, just as other utilities, to be fully active and more self-sufficient participants in society and the workforce. Digital inclusion rests on five major principals within this Plan:



Retrieved from National Digital Inclusion Alliance

- **Access:** the ability for individuals and organizations to connect to the internet using compatible devices and the presence of at least one internet provider at an address.
- **Adoption:** individuals who are actively subscribed to an internet service.
- **Affordability:** the cost and viability for individuals with any income to subscribe to an internet service provider (ISP) in addition to the cost and viability for individuals to purchase or receive an adequate device that can connect to the internet.
- **Digital Literacy:** the necessary skills and appropriate technical support to properly navigate the digital ecosystem (devices, webpages, applications, etc.) in addition to more aspects when concerning education, medical care, virtual meetings, governmental assistance programs, personal endeavors, and beyond.
- **Device Access:** the availability of an unrestricted and internet-enabled device; this does not include restricted homework devices.

While these principles are not independent from each other; they are interconnected and the presence or absence of one impact the overall state of digital inclusion. Additionally, the implementation of one of these principles will not solve the issue of digital inclusion. For example, an unrestricted and internet-enabled device available to each person does not result in digital inclusion; this is because it does not consider a person's skills in how to navigate that device and the internet. Furthermore, it does not consider if they are able to afford an internet subscription nor if they can subscribe to an internet subscription at their home or work.

Why is Digital Inclusion Important?

The importance of digital inclusion lies in the definition – the pursuit to ensure that **all persons and communities** regardless of their socioeconomic status, demographic, or geographic area **have unrestricted access to affordable high-speed internet, an adequate and unrestricted device to use it, and the appropriate and applicable technological support to troubleshoot and learn** (source: [NDIA](#)). The necessity to ensure and support the principles of digital inclusion for all was demonstrated during the COVID-19 Pandemic when everything rapidly transformed into a digital world, while not providing the tools and resources for individuals to be a part of it. As discussed in prior sections, there are a multitude of populations that are impacted by the lack of inclusion and as society becomes more technologically centered, these issues will

continue to arise if they are not addressed. In the county portion of the plan, there is a deeper dive into the specific concerns and gaps surrounding Mid-Carolina's regional communities - Cumberland, Harnett, and Sampson Counties – and the county determinations and enterprise that will help develop creative approaches and initiatives to ensure digital inclusion for their communities and to help close the divide.

Key Barriers to Digital Inclusion

- Broadband
 - Unaffordable
 - Unreliable service
 - Digital redlining
- Devices
 - Unaffordable
 - Outdated software
 - Device not matching user's needs
- Digital skills
 - Limited skills
 - Fear and shame
 - Inaccessible trainings

COUNTY ANALYSIS

Critical Findings of the Region

The North Carolina Department of Commerce annually ranks the state's 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a Tier designation: Tier 1 being the most distressed counties, Tier 2, and Tier 3 being the least distressed. Mid-Carolina's three member counties have been designated as the following: Cumberland County: Tier 1, Harnett County: Tier 2, and Sampson County: Tier 1. County Tiers are calculated using four factors:

- Average unemployment rate
- Median household income
- Percentage growth in population
- Adjusted property tax base per capita

Based on the findings during the evaluation of the region, it was concluded that these tier designations are consistent with the challenges experienced by each county as it relates to digital inclusion in terms of the severity and the quantity of challenges. Data collected during public engagement events indicated that Harnett County residents have the most internet service options available and have the most devices to use to access the internet. Whereas, Cumberland and Sampson Counties both had few sources of internet service or fewer devices to access the internet.

County Public Engagement

Mid-Carolina Regional Council conducted public engagement opportunities in each of the counties. The following section of the plan includes County-focused summaries which outline the challenges that each county faces and outlines these in accordance with the five principles that categorize digital inclusion. This is also where the plan identifies the goals and strategies in solving those challenges.

At each public engagement opportunity, residents were asked "What are gaps and issues do you experience with Digital Inclusion?" Sixty-two individuals responded to the write-in survey. By far, the most common issue identified related to the expensive cost of internet service. However, issues with the quality of internet service and digital literacy followed. Several respondents

also reported that there are not enough providers and options for them to access the internet with some pointing out the reasoning for this being that they live in a rural area.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY DIGITAL INCLUSION

Overview

Cumberland County has a population of 334,728, according to the 2020 US Census, and encompasses approximately 653 square miles. Cumberland County is located in the “Sandhills” region of North Carolina. The County is predominantly rural and faces challenges that many rural communities in the state have faced as it pertains to broadband resources and access. The County has a slight decrease in growth of its Availability Index Score from 2017 to 2021, it went from 76.58 to 69.66 in just four years. However, despite this decrease in availability the County has a 74.85% broadband subscription rate as of 2021 which formally was 68.62 in 2017.

The creation of a Cumberland County Steering Committee proved to be beneficial in the creation of this plan. The Cumberland Steering Committee was compromised of a representative from Cumberland County Schools, Cumberland County Aging, Cumberland County Library, Cumberland County Public Health, and Veteran’s Affairs. The steering committee met twice over the development of the plan, once in June 2024 to brainstorm digital inclusion gaps and to gain a better understanding of the county’s digital inclusion environment to identify priority areas to target and in August 2024 to discuss public engagement opportunities and to identify potential solutions moving forward.

Fort Liberty

Within Cumberland County one of the largest military installations in the world, Fort Liberty, with over 52,000 military personnel. Fort Liberty is located within Cumberland and Hoke County, and jurisdictional borders of Fayetteville, Spring Lake, and Southern Pines. Fort Liberty was unable to participate on the steering committee. However, it can be inferred from research that broadband availability to military installations is at the forefront of projects from the Department of Defense. In May 2024, Fiber provider eCommunity stated that it will deploy fiber-to-the-home to U.S. military bases across the country in an effort to enhance the quality of life for military families, improve internet connectivity, provide better access to educational resources, and increase operational efficiency for military personnel (Whipple, 2024). Additionally,

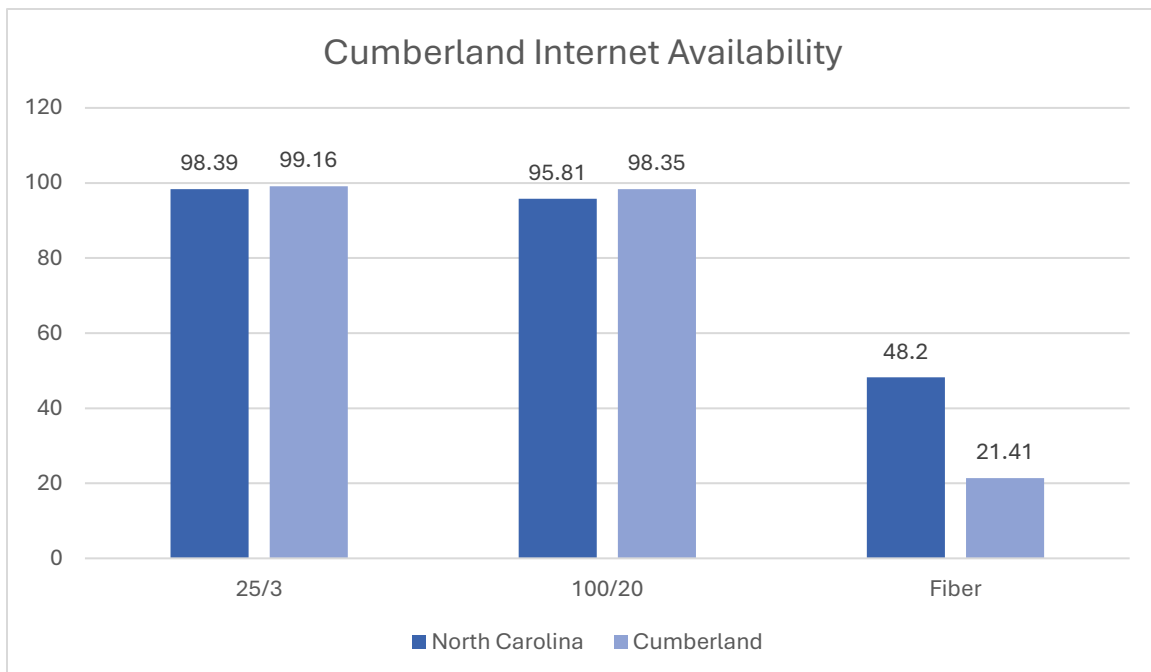
eCommunity committed to deploying a high-capacity dedicated network specifically for military installations, addressing the rising demand for high-speed fiber internet in base housing. (Whipple, 2024)

Access

Access refers to the ability for individuals and organizations to connect to the internet using compatible devices and the presence of at least one internet provider at an address.

In July 2024, Cumberland County received two awards from the Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) program. The news was announced in a press release published on July 5th that states “NCDIT announced two awards for projects by Connect Holding II, LLC (Brightspeed) and StarVision, Inc., which will have a total project cost of approximately \$6.9 million and provide high-speed internet access to 1,692 locations, or approximately 74% of the county’s 2,286 locations that were eligible under the program.” (*State Broadband Program Announces Projects to Expand Internet Access in Cumberland County*, 2024)

“Access to reliable broadband is crucial for our residents as they navigate today’s digital society. Cumberland County is pleased that through the Completing Access to Broadband program, we can partner with the state and



service providers to reach 74% of locations in our county that are considered unserved. This is a tremendous step forward,” said Cumberland County Board of Commissioners Chairman Glenn Adams. (*State Broadband Program Announces Projects to Expand Internet Access in Cumberland County, 2024*) The CAB program builds a partnership between NCDIT and counties to identify areas that need access, solicit proposals from prequalified internet service providers and quickly make awards. Awardees must agree to provide high-speed service that reliably meets or exceeds speeds of 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload.

Internet Providers

Cumberland County has 14 different internet providers who offer a variety of internet services for residents to utilize and find the best option for them. The chart below is broken down by zip code and if a service provider is there.

ZIP CODES	BRIGHTSPEED	SPECTRUM	VIASAT	EARTHLINK	HUGHESNET	METRONET	VERIZON	ALWAYSON	STARLINK	T-MOBILE	STAR COMMUNICATION	US CELLULAR	CLOUD WYZE	FOCUS BROADBAND
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28441														

Free Public Wi-Fi Locations

Cumberland County is working to create and set up Wi-Fi Kiosks that will be placed in front of county buildings that individuals can utilize.

City	Location	Notes
Fayetteville	414 Ray Ave.	Find the Wi-Fi option labeled NCWorks Public; no password required
Fayetteville	North Regional Branch Library, 855 McArthur Rd, Fayetteville	Available during library hours
Fayetteville	West Regional Branch Library, 7469 Century Cir, Fayetteville	Available during library hours
Fayetteville	Cliffdale Branch Library, 6882 Cliffdale Rd, Fayetteville	Available during library hours
Fayetteville	Bordeaux Branch Library, 3711 Village Dr, Fayetteville	Available during library hours
Fayetteville	East Regional Branch Library, 4809 Clinton Rd, Fayetteville	Available during library hours
Fayetteville	Headquarters Library 300 Maiden Lane, Fayetteville NC 28301	Available during library hours
Hope Mills	Hope Mills Branch Library, 3411 Golfview Rd, Hope Mills	Available during library hours
Spring Lake	Spring Lake Branch Library, 101 Laketree Blvd, Spring Lake	Available during library hours

Information taken from the NCDIT Website

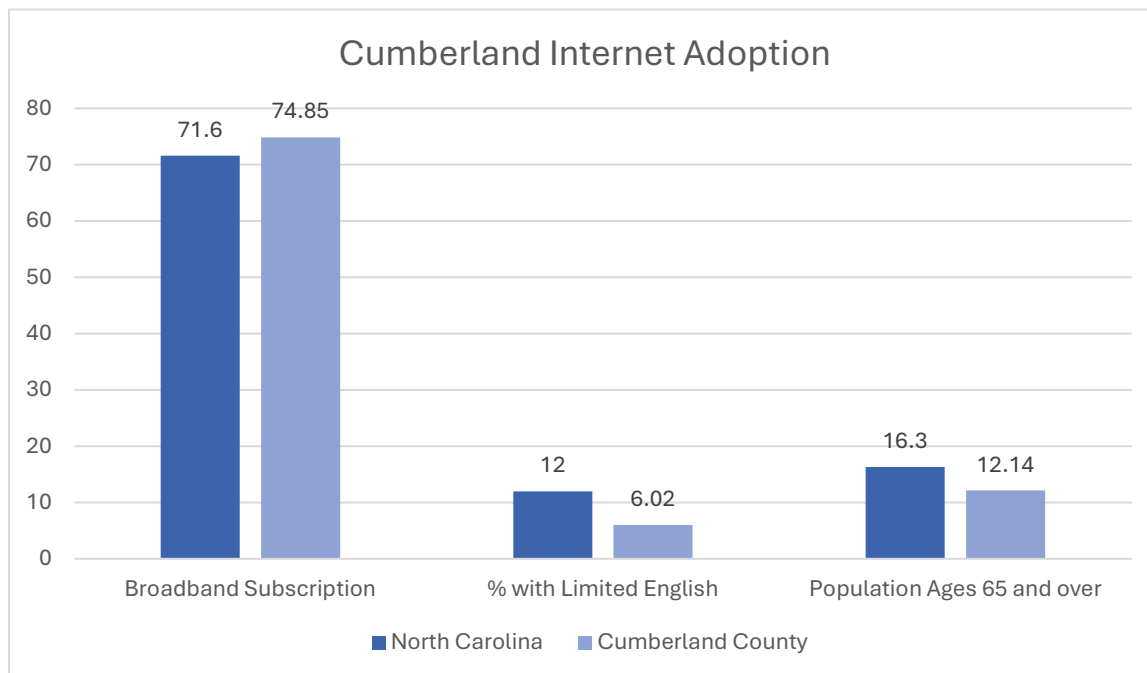
Adoption

Broadband adoption is when a household subscribes to an internet service in their home. There are many reasons for not subscribing at home, but there are four key barriers to adoption:

- The cost associated with the subscription to broadband service.
- The cost of a device to use the broadband service.
- A person's lack of existing digital literacy skills, like how to use the internet or device.
- The perceived lack of relevance or benefit to the person's life.

While the issues surrounding availability to reliable, high-speed internet is often the topic of discussions around broadband, adoption remains a substantial issue. According to the Federal Communications Commission, only 59.4% of North Carolina households subscribe to at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps. The American Community Survey found that almost 25% of households do not subscribe to any internet services at all.

Adoption obstacles in Cumberland County are disadvantaged population such as older populations who need assistance, language barriers, and limited coverage in the more rural areas.



Information taken from the NCDIT Website

Affordability

The affordability for individuals of all income levels to effectively subscribe to an internet service provider is vital to closing the digital gap. One of the more prevalent programs was the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP was a federal benefit program offered through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that provides a discount of up to \$30 a month for internet service subscriptions for eligible households (or up to \$75 on qualifying Tribal lands) and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a device from participating providers if more than \$10 and less than \$50 is contributed towards the purchase. Households with an income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible, in addition to households where a member is a recipient of at least one of the following: Federal Pell Grant, SNAP, Medicaid, Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, Federal Housing Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, WIC, Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits, Lifeline, Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation, Tribal Head Start.

However, as of June 1, 2024, households will no longer receive an ACP Discount due to lack of additional funding from Congress. As of June 2024, households are encouraged to contact their internet company to discuss lower cost plans and/or a low-income program option. Another option for affordable connectivity is households that may be eligible for the [FCC's Lifeline program](#), which offers up to \$9.25 a month off phone, internet, or bundled phone and internet services (up to \$34.25 if you live on qualifying Tribal lands). However, not all ACP recipients will qualify for Lifeline and not all ACP internet companies participate in the Lifeline program.

Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy is the necessary skills and appropriate technical support to properly navigate the digital ecosystem (devices, webpages, applications, etc.) in addition to more particular aspects when concerning education, medical care, virtual meetings, governmental assistance programs, personal endeavors, and beyond.

Cumberland County Library has begun the implementation of Digital Literacy through the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment. This program helps adults acquire the skills needed for the current workplace. It includes self-guided

modules: Essential Computer Skills (Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics, Using Email, Windows, Mac OS), Essential Software Skills (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), and Using Technology in Daily Life (Social Media, Information Literacy, and Creative Job Search).

Additionally, the library has implemented a Digital Navigator and Community Navigator Program to address common issues and concerns that revolve around digital inclusion. These programs offer the opportunity for individuals to schedule one-on-one time with a member of staff to discuss their specific needs and concerns, as well as hosting training workshops for individuals to attend that address specific topics.

There is a monthly calendar posted on the [Cumberland County Public Library \(librarycalendar.com\)](http://librarycalendar.com) website.

The North Carolina Farmworker Health Program (NCFHP) offers bilingual (English/Spanish) digital literacy video playlist was created by the ECU Library of Medicine and funded by the National Library of Medicine.

- [What is Phishing?](#)
- [Staying Connected](#)
- [Staying Informed](#)
- [Telemedicine](#)

Additional resources include

- [Cyber Seniors](#) – nonprofit that provides older adults with tech-training.
- [AARP Senior Planet](#) - a community of people 60 and older who are learning to thrive in today's digital world.
- [GCFGlobal.org](#) - the GCFGlobal.org program has helped millions around the world learn the essential skills they need to live and work in the 21st century by offering self-paced online courses.
 - Available in Spanish and Português
- [Crash Course](#) – YouTube based channel that offers and produce high-quality educational videos.

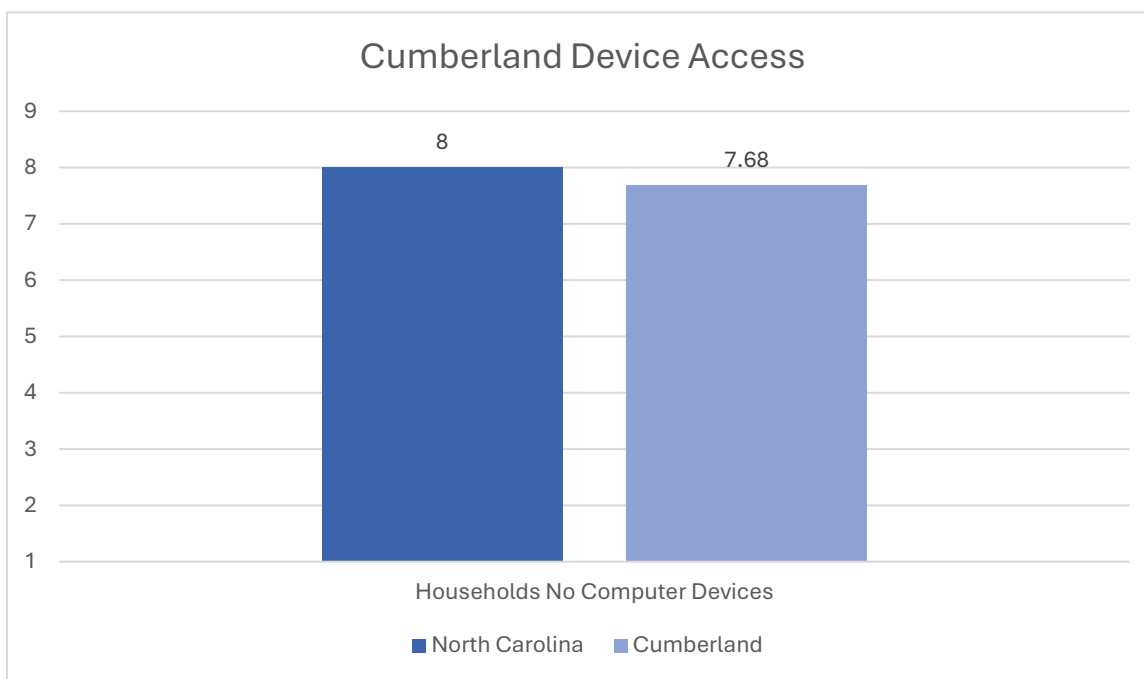
Device Access

Device Access is the availability of an unrestricted and internet-enabled device; this does not include restricted homework devices.

Cumberland County Library offers a hotspot checkout program for county residents. Individuals must be over 18 years old with a valid library card to check out a hotspot for 21 days at a time. The library circulates 150 hotspots to each of the branch locations.

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Rural Health's North Carolina Farmworker Health Program offers hotspots for farmworkers through their partners.

- Access East (Eastern North Carolina)



Information taken from the NCDIT Website

Cumberland County is currently working on the implementation of distributing old county -owned computers to those in need. As of July 2024, the program has not officially begun, however there are other resources and organizations that make devices readily available to individuals in need. The Kramden Institute offers a variety of programs available for K-12 students, adults, non-profits and schools, assistance with public sales and eBay, and can provide assistance with Internet accessibility.

- K-12 Students

- Students must be in grades K-12
- Students must not have consistent access to a working home computer
- One computer per household unless special circumstances apply
- Students can be nominated by a parent or educator
- The free desktop computers come with an open-source operating system (OS) called Ubuntu. This OS comes preinstalled with over 60 apps including an offline encyclopedia and word processing applications. Tech support will be provided to the student if questions or issues with the device arise.
- At this time, computers must be picked up from the Kramden office in Durham, NC. Kramden is not able to ship computers.
- Those looking for assistance distributing large numbers of devices at alternative locations can reach out to Kramden to discuss options.
- Application can be found here: [Kramden Tech Scholars Application Form](#)
- Adults
 - Kramden Institute offers the following services for eligible applicants:
 - Low-cost refurbished computers: \$30 desktops and \$70 laptops
 - 90-day warranty with all computers
 - All computers come with Windows 10 installed
 - Computers must be picked up at Kramden Institute in Durham. Shipping is not available at this time.
 - How to Apply for a Computer
 - Individuals can apply themselves. Proof of eligibility is required
 - Must be a low-income adult, below 200% of the poverty level
 - OR –
 - Must be an adult enrolled in an income-based government assistance program (i.e. SNAP, Medicaid, Disability)
 - Individuals can be nominated by a partner agency
 - See the [list of partner agencies here](#)

- If your agency is not a partner, email info@kramden.org to discuss becoming one.
- Non-Profits & Schools
 - Kramden Institute is proud to present our Tech Equipment Partners program. As part of Kramden's efforts to help our community, they offer affordable, heavily discounted computer equipment to other, local non-profits, schools, religious organizations, and other institutions.
 - Refurbished Equipment
 - They can build the following to spec:
 - Desktops
 - Laptops
 - Servers
 - Network Attached Storage devices (NAS)
- Public Sales & eBay
 - Refurbished Equipment for Sale
 - Kramden has 2 easy ways to make a purchase:
 - In Person
 - They hold Surplus Computer Sales every 3-4 weeks at our office in Durham, NC. The dates are listed below. Sign up for their newsletter to see what's featured in the upcoming Surplus Computer Sales.
 - They feature a wide variety of equipment including laptops, desktops, and monitors.
 - Sales are open to the public at 5010 NC Hwy 55, Durham, NC 27713
 - All proceeds benefit their programs to bridge the digital divide.
 - Online
 - Shop their eBay store. Kramden is a top-rated seller with more than 5,000 positive reviews!
- Free or Low-Cost Internet
 - Need Internet?
 - If you need help with finding low-cost internet options, please call (919)-293-1133 x1018


Public Engagement

Mid-Carolina Regional Council held a public engagement event at Cumberland County's Bordeaux Public Library where Mid-Carolina Regional Council staff were able to successfully survey 15 individuals and families.

What type of device, if any, do you own to connect to the internet?	
Smartphone	12
Tablet	10
Desktop	9
Laptop	11
Chromebook	-
Go to the library or organization to use device	2
Go to a friend or family members home to use device	1
Don't want to connect to the internet	-
Don't know where to go to access a device	-
What is preventing you from connecting to the internet through a service that isn't mobile?	
Internet is too expensive	7
Internet is not available	-
Don't want the internet	1
Don't know how to use the internet	4
Internet is available but does not work well enough	6
Don't have a device to connect to the internet	1
What groups do you identify with?	
Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area	3
Individuals who have immigrated	3
Incarcerated or formally incarcerated individuals	1
Individuals of a racial or ethnic minority group	9
Aging individuals (65+)	4
LGBTQI+ Individuals	2
Individuals with a language barrier (includes English learners and low levels of literacy)	2
Veterans	4

What is the primary type of internet service used at home?	
Cable Modem (Spectrum, Optimum)	6
DSL (Brightspeed, Century Link)	1
Fiber (AT&T Fiber, Google)	2
Fixed Wireless (SkyRunner, CloudWyze)	-
Satellite (HughesNet, Starlink)	-
Cellular Hotspots (AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, Mint, US Cellular)	2
None – Utilize Public Hotspots	-

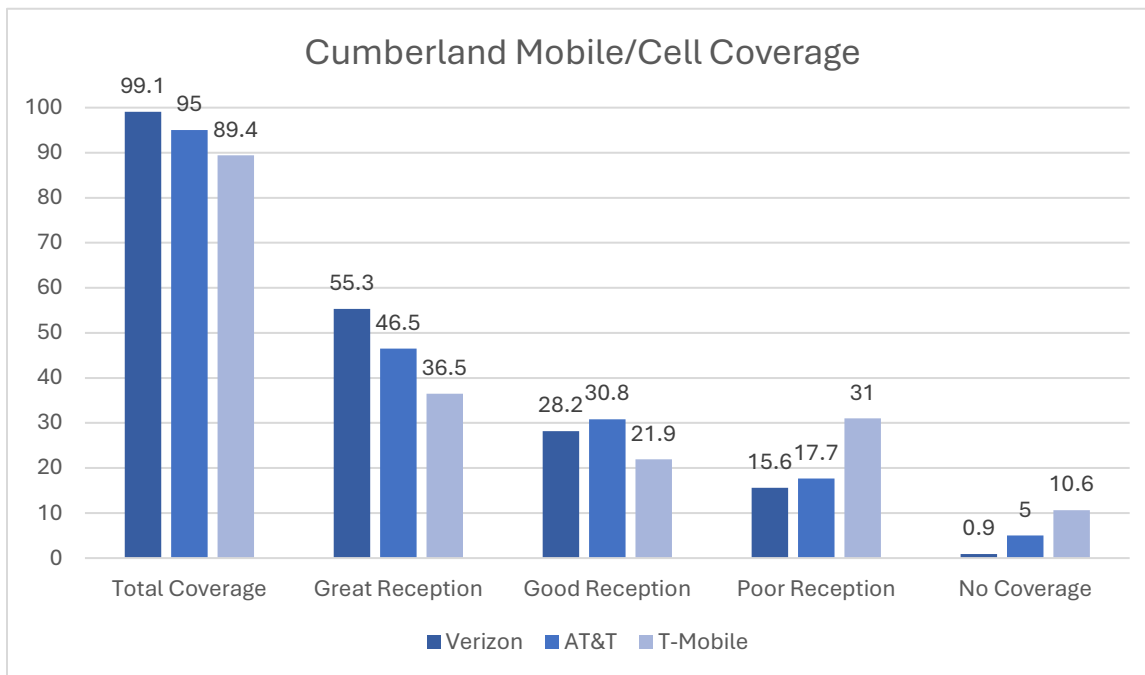
Survey participants were also asked questions regarding what gaps and issues that they experience with digital inclusion:

• Extra fees	• Price	• Lose service
• Expand wi-fi areas	• Weak signal	• Not easy to use or navigate
• Unaffordable	• Affordability	• Does not work
• Limited providers	• Price	• Want fiber
• Not computer literate	• Cost	• Low connectivity, buffering
• Issues with devices	• Weak spots in library	• More affordable options
• More literacy courses	• Do not understand devices	• No internet, use public wi-fi
• Expensive, rural areas	• Do not understand devices	• FSU issues with Wi-Fi on campus vs off campus
• Rural issues with connections		
• Do not understand devices		
• Price		
• Need more affordable options		

Additional Resources

Mobile/Cell Providers

Based on data pulled from CoverageMap.com, the most prevalent mobile/cell providers in Cumberland County are Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile. The highest coverage areas are in Fayetteville and the immediate surrounding area, with coverage becoming limited in the more rural areas with the exception of along major highways and I-95.



[Map | CoverageMap.com](http://CoverageMap.com)

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BROADBAND PROFILE

Summary of broadband service in the county based on FCC reported unserved areas compared with current funding programs focusing on improving broadband in the county.

FCC Reported Unserved & Underserved Locations***

Count of Unserved/Underserved
 Percent Unserved/Underserved



***Unserved & Underserved Locations from the FCC Broadband Data Collection have been aggregated into hexagon-shaped bins to show both the count and percent of unserved & underserved locations within each bin. Locations that have had funds obligated through previous Federal, State or Local broadband expansion programs have been removed from the hexagonal aggregations and county estimates. Darker shades of pink indicate higher total counts of unserved & underserved locations. Darker shades of blue indicate a higher percentage of locations within a bin are unserved & underserved locations. Darker shades of purple indicate both a higher total of unserved & underserved locations and a higher percentage of total locations within a bin are unserved & underserved locations.

Unserved locations for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded programs in NC are defined as locations without access to fixed terrestrial internet service, through Fiber, Cable, or non-mobile Licensed Fixed Wireless technologies, of at least 25mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload speeds. Underserved locations are defined as locations without access to fixed terrestrial internet service of at least 100mb/s Download and 20mb/s Upload speeds, but greater than 25mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload speeds.

- Local Award Locations (ARPA Funded)
- GREAT Award Locations (ARPA Funded) - Contracted
- GREAT Award Locations (ARPA Funded) - Contingent
- CAB Award Locations (ARPA Funded) - Contingent
- GREAT Award Locations (State Funded)
- GREAT Award Areas (State Funded)
- FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Grant
- Other Federal Grants

CUMBERLAND COUNTY ESTIMATES

Percent Unserved *

(No Service 10mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload or Greater)

1.94% 2,323 Total Locations

Percent Underserved *

(No Service 100mb/s Download and 20mb/s Upload or Greater)

0% 0 Total Locations

Percent with Fiber Broadband Available *

39.09% 46,870 Total Locations

Percent with DSL Only *

2.27% 2,721 Total Locations

Percent with Broadband Subscription **

74.85%

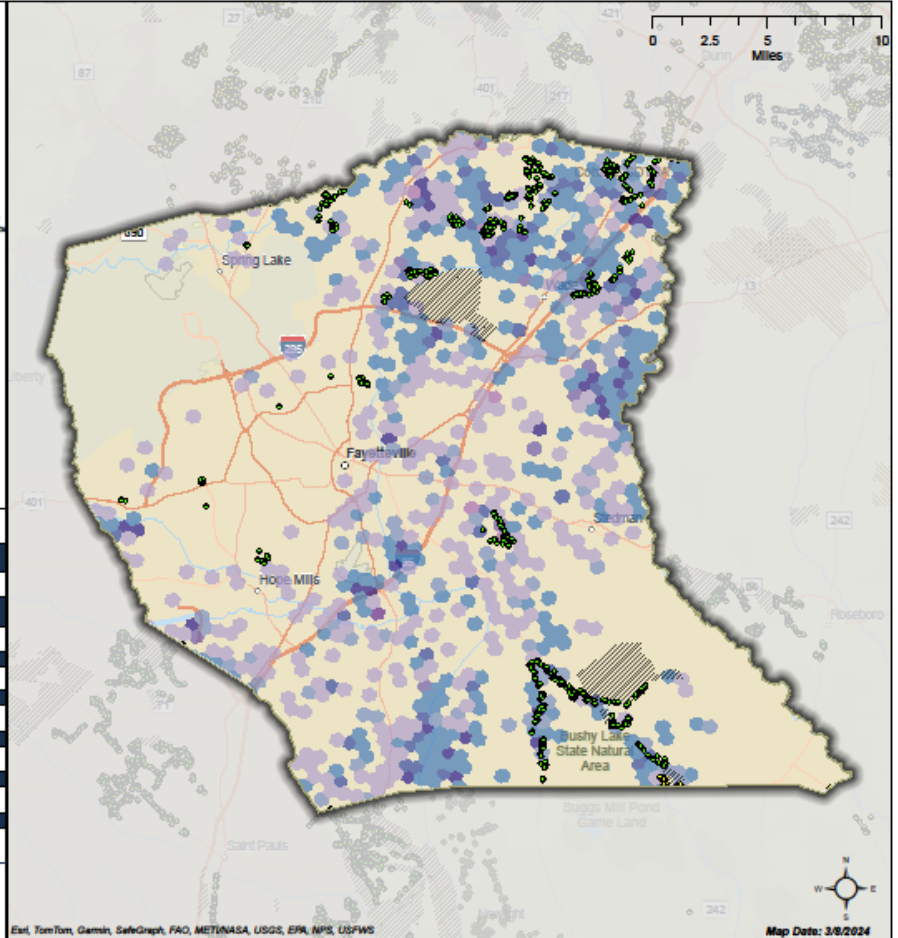
Percent with No Internet Access **

10.18%

Percent with No Internet Devices **

7.93%

DATA SOURCES:
 *FCC BDC - Federal Communication Commission Broadband Data Collection Version 3 Published November 2023 (Provider Reported as of June 30, 2023)
 **ACS - U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates



Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METANASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS

Map Date: 3/8/2024

Cumberland County Digital Inclusion Needs Inventory

The table below illustrates Cumberland County's needs relating to Digital Inclusion. A strategy to address each need, as well as the desired result of each strategy are outlined. Cumberland County will be leading the charge on each identified strategy. Mid-Carolina Regional Council will assist Cumberland with implementation as needed.

Cumberland County Digital Inclusion Needs Inventory		
Access		
Need	Strategy	Result
Continue to assess and collect information about served, unserved, and underserved areas.	On a quarterly basis, distribute and promote the NCDIT Broadband Survey County-wide to collect small scale data.	This will assist in acquiring broadband funding, appropriately challenging FCC data, and providing a more accurate picture of coverage availability for ISPs.
Prioritize and promote the free public Wi-Fi areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a bi-annual basis, evaluate free public wi-fi areas and explore opportunities for additional public wi-fi facilities. • On a bi-annual basis, send Community Centers and similar organizations an up-to-date list of free public Wi-Fi facilities. • On a quarterly basis, ensure wi-fi access is operational at Cumberland County Recreational facilities and Senior Centers. 	Ensure continued operations of public Wi-Fi facilities in the County are maintained and serviced, while also ensuring that the County is evaluating the need for improvements and communicating any changes to free Wi-Fi facilities to the community.
Update the inventory and map of all free	Create and regularly update an inventory	Distribute an updated inventory and map of

public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes.	and map of all free public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes.	free public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes for use.
Identify needs of broadband and residential fiber access	Hold a meeting with electric membership cooperatives (EMC) to understand capacity and interest in broadband internet business.	Create a prioritization list for broadband and residential fiber access that can be utilized in future funding opportunities to expand fiber and broadband where deemed most appropriate.
Extend hotspot subscriptions to individuals in need.	Assist in extending hotspot subscriptions to institutions and organizations that have experienced success in their implementation (community health centers, Cooperative Extension offices, libraries, etc.) through grant opportunities and notification of availability.	Inclusion of device access and internet connectivity.
Identify internet subsidy programs that will serve individuals and families in need.	Create a catalogue of all local internet subsidy programs that serve individuals and families in need of assistance.	The County will have a catalogue of all local internet subsidy programs that serve individuals and families in need of assistance. This will be available for distribution to members of the public and local organizations.

Identify and map broadband infrastructure.	Communicate with ISPs to understand the location of both Lit and Dark Fiber to best coordinate economic development potential and relay information to Economic Development Commissions and Chambers of Commerce.	Provide broadband infrastructure in development corridors to encourage business expansion and openings.
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Adoption		
Need	Strategy	Result
Continue to assess and collect information about served, unserved, and underserved areas.	Distribute and promote the NCDIT Broadband Survey County-wide to collect small scale data.	This will assist in acquiring broadband funding, appropriately challenging FCC data, and providing a more accurate picture of coverage availability for ISPs
Identify future funding opportunities.	Research and identify future funding opportunities that may garner community support	Communities may be able to take advantage of funding opportunities to further support digital inclusion needs

Affordability		
Need	Strategy	Result
Financial Assistance of internet subscriptions	Communicate and coordinate with local programs and organizations to provide	Affordable internet subscriptions for community residents.

	financial assistance for internet subscriptions and device and accessory costs.	
Provide information and assistance regarding FCC's Lifeline Program to residents.	Incorporate FCC's eligibility and application when applying for other services (e.g., Family Caregiver Support Program, SNAP/EBT, W.I.C., Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, etc.) at both the local government level and community organization level.	Formation of partnerships between other government programs

Digital Literacy		
Need	Strategy	Result
Increase awareness and training for Digital Literacy	Distribute pre-existing digital skill tutorials, webinars, and toolkits through senior centers, school systems, Town and County networks, community organizations, Agricultural Extension Offices, and beyond.	Increased awareness and training of Digital Literacy
<p>Improve digital literacy for senior populations.</p> <p>Provide 1 on 1 in-person technical assistance for older adults at senior centers, libraries,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide individualized in-person technical assistance for senior citizens at senior centers, libraries, Extension Offices, and more. • Provide quarterly digital literacy classes at local 	Increase digital literacy amongst the County's Senior population, to equip them with the tools and knowledge necessary to be resilient from cyber security threats and

Extension Offices, and beyond.	senior centers or libraries to teach basic fundamentals to senior citizens. Staffing could be provided by Fayetteville Technical College, High School students, volunteers, and beyond. Cooperative Extension staff can undergo training in coordination with the Cooperative Extension's Broadband Access and Education Coordinator to provide in-house technical assistance.	improve their access to critical needs
Promote technical assistance resources for senior populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute technical assistance resources for older adults through senior centers, area agency on aging, social services, and beyond. • Promote no-cost services such as Cyber Seniors: toll free 1-844 217-3057 and Senior Planet: 888-713-3495 	Increased awareness of free training opportunities that senior population can take advantage of to increase digital literacy.
Incorporate telehealth services and technical support in available resources.	Foster partnerships between healthcare systems and older adults to ensure they have the skills to appropriately participate in telehealth options.	Increase awareness of use and access of telehealth services for senior population.
Promote Digital Literacy for members of the North Carolina agricultural	Create a community support network with the agricultural community	A community support network that will ensure that Cooperative

labor force and their families.	through coordination with Cooperative Extension Offices and other agricultural entities to assist and distribute digital literacy resources that address entrepreneurship, business, agriculture, and more.	Extension Offices maintain contact with the Cooperative Extension's Broadband Access and Education Coordinator and maximize digital inclusion opportunities
Promote an assistance program or event for devices.	Market and promote a Device Diagnostic Day in coordination with Cumberland County Library.	Individuals can receive free assistance and troubleshooting for devices such as Macs, PCs, and smartphones.
To simplify terminology for digital literacy to ensure more understanding	Ensure that all toolkits and digital literacy assistance are written at a 5th grade reading level in both English and Spanish to provide more inclusive language.	Uniform understanding of digital literacy

Device Access		
Need	Strategy	Result
Improve access and affordability to encourage ownership of devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize distribution of devices directly to individuals or families that will keep them as opposed to rental programs that create a cycle of inaccessibility. • Contract for device distributions through libraries, HUD Affordable Housing opportunities, 	Create affordable device access for individuals and families

	school systems, community organizations, and individuals and families.	
Improve access to devices such as printers and scanners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inventory and map of facilities with devices that are like the public Wi-Fi inventory map. • Create prioritization, based on volume of usage, of facilities that need additional equipment or improvements to ensure needs are being met. 	Create affordable device access for small business owners, entrepreneurs, and more.

Additional Resources		
Need	Strategy	Result
Create a clearinghouse of resources addressed in this Plan to publish on Town and County websites.	On a quarterly basis, distribute this resource to other stakeholders (e.g., libraries, senior centers, Cooperative Extensions, school systems, etc.) and ensure that information is updated and maintained regularly.	Increase awareness of resources to improve access for individuals.
Address gaps in rural health	Communicate with the NC Farmworker Health Program within the Office of Rural Health to coordinate, learn of new resources, and implement programs within the agricultural	Availability of resources that specialize in rural health for farmworkers to utilize

	community in partnership with Town and County departments and community organizations; 800-533-8847	
Affordable, low-cost device distribution assistance	Identify and partner with local/ regional I.T. businesses to refurbish personal devices that can be donated for individuals in need.	Reduction of E-waste and provide a usable internet enabled device to individuals in need.
Digital Navigator for community	Hire a part-time or full-time digital navigator to serve as a permanent digital inclusion contact point and a reliable individual to travel accordingly within the County/Region.	Individual can aid with those in need across the county/region.
Address gaps amongst farmworkers	Gauge Cooperative Extension interest in increasing Visit NC Farms App capacity to assist farmers, growers, and producers with limited digital literacy and internet access in having an online presence.	Partnership support with the Cooperative Extension

HARNETT COUNTY DIGITAL INCLUSION

Overview

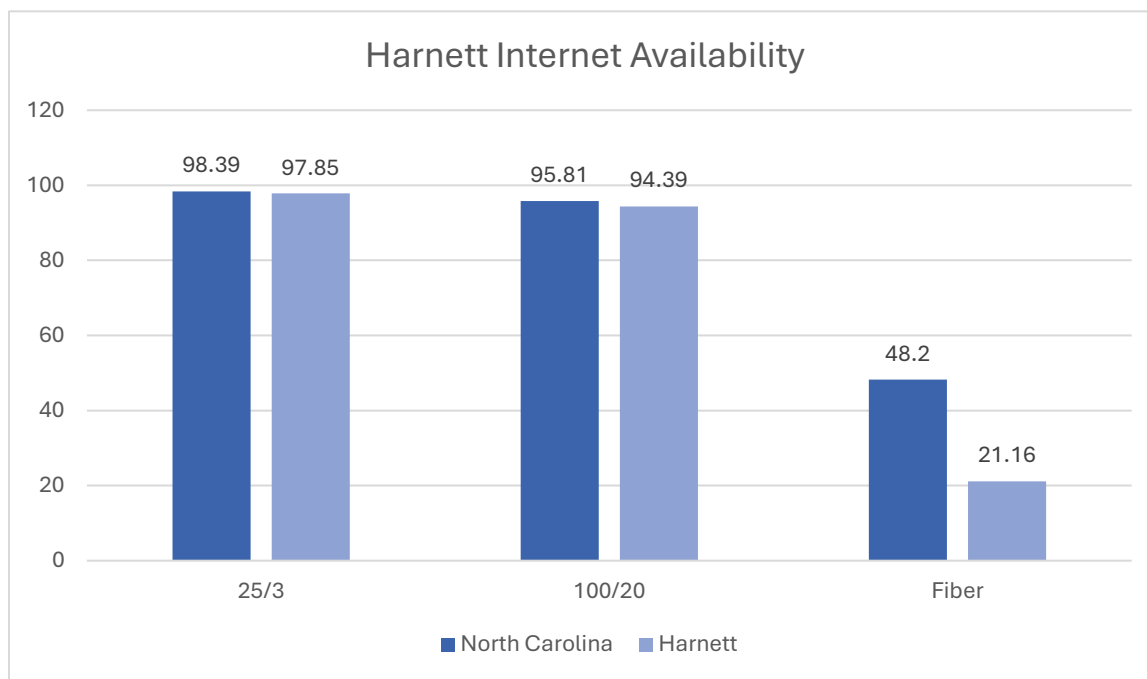
Harnett County has a population of 133,571, according to the 2020 US Census, and encompasses approximately 595 square miles. The area is geographically diverse and sits between the Piedmont, Sandhills, and the Coastal Plain. The County is predominantly rural and faces challenges that many rural communities in the state have faced as it pertains to broadband resources and access. The County has a slight decrease in growth of its Availability Index Score from 2017 to 2021, it went from 73.56 to 68.68 in just four years. However, despite this decrease in availability the County has a 68.54% broadband subscription rate as of 2021 which was 65.54 in 2017.

The creation of a Harnett County Steering Committee proved to be beneficial in the creation of this plan. The Harnett Steering Committee was comprised of a representative from Harnett County Schools, Harnett County Aging, Harnett County Library, Harnett County Public Health, and Veteran's Affairs. The steering committee met twice over the development of the plan, once in June 2024 to brainstorm digital inclusion gaps and to gain a better understanding of the county's digital inclusion environment to identify priority areas to target and in August 2024 to discuss public engagement opportunities and to identify potential solutions moving forward.

Access

Access refers to the ability for individuals and organizations to connect to the internet using compatible devices and the presence of at least one internet provider at an address.

In Harnett County, while it appears that their endeavors toward availability are quickly advancing since there is not much disparity between what the North Carolina identifies in availability versus what is identified in Harnett County. However, it appears that Harnett's exploration of fiber options is a slower endeavor.



Information taken from the NCDIT Website

Internet Providers

Harnett County has 18 different internet providers who offer a variety of internet services for residents to utilize and find the best option for them. The chart below is broken down by zip code and if a service provider is there.

ZIP CODES	SPECTRUM	KINETIC	VIASAT	EARTHLINK	HUGHESNET	ALWAYSON	VERIZON	USCELLULAR	TING	STARLINK	T-MOBILE	BRIGHTSPEED	CLOUDWYZE	OPENBROADBAND	SEIONTEC	AT&T	HOTWIRE	STAR COMMUNICATIONS
27330																		
27332																		
27501																		
27504																		
27505																		
27521																		
27526																		
27540																		
27546																		
27562																		
27592																		
28323																		
28326																		
28334																		
28339																		
28356																		
28390																		

Free Public Wi-Fi Locations

City	Location	Notes
Angier	Downtown, including baseball and sports fields	Open Broadband
Coats	Coats Public Library, 29 E Main St, Coats	Available 24/7
Dunn	214 W Edgerton St., Dunn	Find the Wi-Fi option labeled NCWorks Public; no password required
Dunn	Dunn Public Library, 110 E Divine St, Dunn	Available 24/7
Erwin	Erwin Public Library, 110 W F St, Erwin	Available 24/7
Lillington	1137 E. Cornelius Harnett Blvd., Lillington	Find the Wi-Fi option labeled NCWorks Public; no password required
Lillington	Boone Trail Community Center & Library, 8500 Old US 421, Lillington	Available 24/7
Lillington	Harnett County Public Library (Main), 455 McKinney Pkwy, Lillington	Available 24/7
Sanford	Benhaven Public Library, 2815 Olivia Rd, Sanford	Available 24/7

Information taken from the NCDIT Website

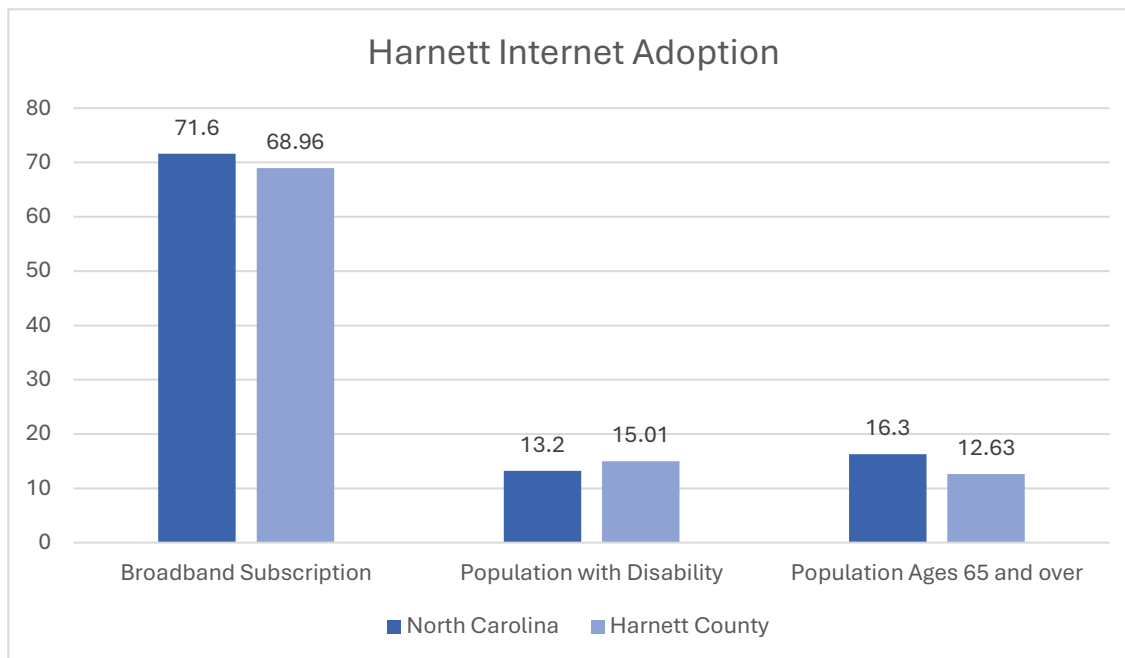
Adoption

Broadband adoption is when a household subscribes to an internet service in their home. There are many reasons for not subscribing at home, but there are four key barriers to adoption:

- The cost associated with the subscription to broadband service.
- The cost of a device to use the broadband service.
- A person's lack of existing digital literacy skills, like how to use the internet or device.
- The perceived lack of relevance or benefit to the person's life.

While the issues surrounding availability to reliable, high-speed internet is often the topic of discussions around broadband, adoption remains a substantial issue. According to the Federal Communications Commission, only 59.4% of North Carolina households subscribe to at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps. The American Community Survey found that almost 25% of households do not subscribe to any internet services at all.

Adoption obstacles in Harnett County are disadvantaged population such as older populations who need assistance and with disability, in addition to limited coverage in the more rural areas.



Information taken from the NCDIT Website

Affordability

The affordability for individuals of all income levels to effectively subscribe to an internet service provider is vital to closing the digital gap. One of the more prevalent programs was the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP was a federal benefit program offered through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that provides a discount of up to \$30 a month for internet service subscriptions for eligible households (or up to \$75 on qualifying Tribal lands) and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a device from participating providers if more than \$10 and less than \$50 is contributed towards the purchase. Households with an income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible, in addition to households where a member is a recipient of at least one of the following: Federal Pell Grant, SNAP, Medicaid, Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, Federal Housing Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, WIC, Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits, Lifeline, Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation, Tribal Head Start.

However, as of June 1, 2024, households will no longer receive an ACP Discount due to lack of additional funding from Congress. As of June 2024, households are encouraged to contact their internet company to discuss lower cost plans and/or a low-income program option. Another option for affordable connectivity is households that may be eligible for the [FCC's Lifeline program](#), which offers up to \$9.25 a month off phone, internet, or bundled phone and internet services (up to \$34.25 if you live on qualifying Tribal lands). However, not all ACP recipients will qualify for Lifeline and not all ACP internet companies participate in the Lifeline program.

Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy is the necessary skills and appropriate technical support to properly navigate the digital ecosystem (devices, webpages, applications, etc.) in addition to more particular aspects when concerning education, medical care, virtual meetings, governmental assistance programs, personal endeavors, and beyond.

Harnett County Library has begun the implementation of Digital Literacy through the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment. This program helps adults acquire the skills needed for the current workplace. It includes self-guided modules: Essential Computer Skills (Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics, Using Email, Windows, Mac OS), Essential Software Skills (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), and Using Technology in Daily Life (Social Media, Information Literacy, and Creative Job Search).

Additionally, the library offers technology classes and workshops for all skill levels throughout the year. Some of the classes and workshops are:

- 3D Printing for Newbies
- Computers for Beginners
- iPads and iPhones
- Microsoft Excel and Word for Beginners

More of the course offerings can be found [here](#).

The North Carolina Farmworker Health Program (NCFHP) offers bilingual (English/Spanish) digital literacy video playlist was created by the ECU Library of Medicine and funded by the National Library of Medicine.

- [What is Phishing?](#)
- [Staying Connected](#)
- [Staying Informed](#)
- [Telemedicine](#)

Additional resources include

- [Cyber Seniors](#) – nonprofit that provides older adults with tech-training.
- [AARP Senior Planet](#) - a community of people 60 and older who are learning to thrive in today's digital world.

- [GCFGlobal.org](https://www.gcfglobal.org) - the GCFGlobal.org program has helped millions around the world learn the essential skills they need to live and work in the 21st century by offering self-paced online courses.
 - Available in Spanish and Português
- [Crash Course](#) – YouTube based channel that offers and produce high-quality educational videos.

Device Access

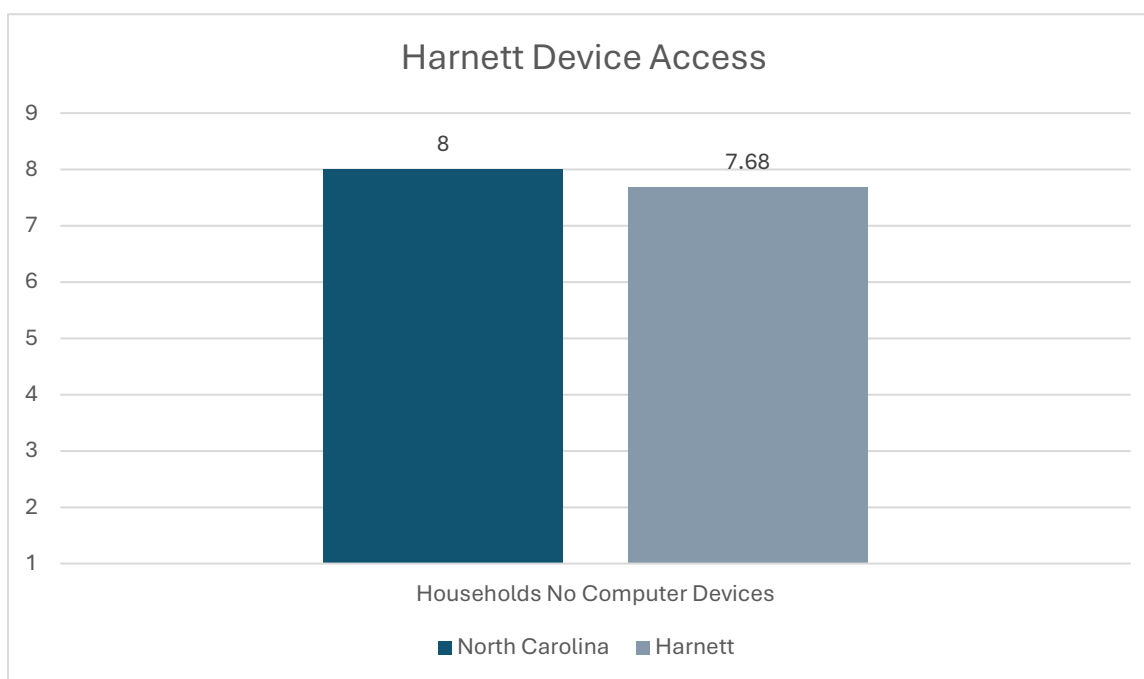
Device Access is the availability of an unrestricted and internet-enabled device; this does not include restricted homework devices.

The Harnett County Library offers on-site computers for individuals to utilize and have seen these resources utilized for

- Job applications
- Amazon returns; label printing
- Personal usage such as online shopping and visiting government websites

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Rural Health's North Carolina Farmworker Health Program offers hotspots for farmworkers through their partners.

- Access East (Eastern North Carolina)
- NC Farmworkers Project (Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, Franklin, Granville, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Robeson and Sampson)



Information taken from the NCDIT Website

While Harnett County does not have a program that offers free, or discounted, devices for purchase to members of the community, there are other resources and organizations that make devices readily available to individuals in need. The Kramden Institute offers a variety of programs available for K-12 students, adults, non-profits and schools, assistance with public sales and eBay, and can provide assistance with Internet accessibility.

- K-12 Students

- Students must be in grades K-12
- Students must not have consistent access to a working home computer
- One computer per household unless special circumstances apply
- Students can be nominated by a parent or educator
- The free desktop computers come with an open-source operating system (OS) called Ubuntu. This OS comes preinstalled with over 60 apps including an offline encyclopedia and word processing applications. Tech support will be provided to the student if questions or issues with the device arise.
- At this time, computers must be picked up from the Kramden office in Durham, NC. Kramden is not able to ship computers.
- Those looking for assistance distributing large numbers of devices at alternative locations can reach out to Kramden to discuss options.
- Application can be found here: [Kramden Tech Scholars Application Form](#)

- Adults

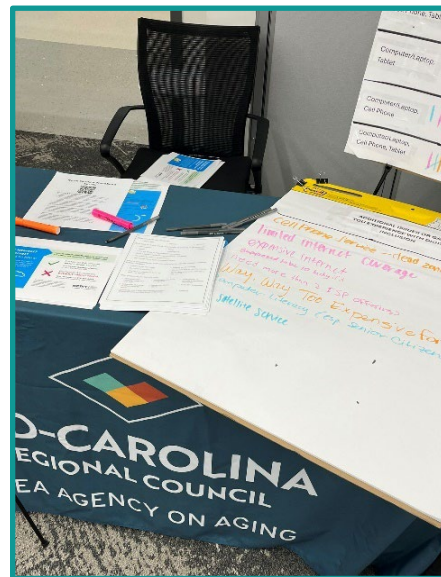
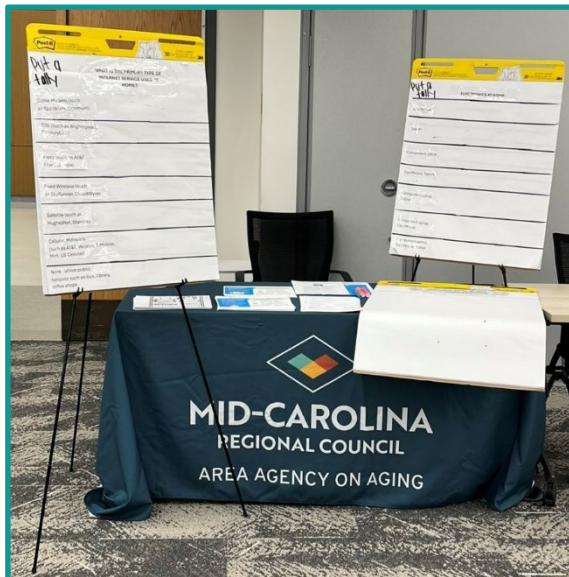
- Kramden Institute offers the following services for eligible applicants:
 - Low-cost refurbished computers: \$30 desktops and \$70 laptops
 - 90-day warranty with all computers
 - All computers come with Windows 10 installed
 - Computers must be picked up at Kramden Institute in Durham. Shipping is not available at this time.
- How to Apply for a Computer
 - Individuals can apply themselves. Proof of eligibility is required

- Must be a low-income adult, below 200% of the poverty level
 - OR –
 - Must be an adult enrolled in an income-based government assistance program (i.e. SNAP, Medicaid, Disability)
- Individuals can be nominated by a partner agency
 - See the [list of partner agencies here](#)
 - If your agency is not a partner, email info@kramden.org to discuss becoming one.
- Non-Profits & Schools
 - Kramden Institute is proud to present our Tech Equipment Partners program. As part of Kramden's efforts to help our community, they offer affordable, heavily discounted computer equipment to other, local non-profits, schools, religious organizations, and other institutions.
 - Refurbished Equipment
 - They can build the following to spec:
 - Desktops
 - Laptops
 - Servers
 - Network Attached Storage devices (NAS)
- Public Sales & eBay
 - Refurbished Equipment for Sale
 - Kramden has 2 easy ways to make a purchase:
 - In Person
 - They hold Surplus Computer Sales every 3-4 weeks at our office in Durham, NC. The dates are listed below. Sign up for their newsletter to see what's featured in the upcoming Surplus Computer Sales.
 - They feature a wide variety of equipment including laptops, desktops, and monitors.
 - Sales are open to the public at 5010 NC Hwy 55, Durham, NC 27713
 - All proceeds benefit their programs to bridge the digital divide.
 - Online

- Shop their eBay store. Kramden is a top-rated seller with more than 5,000 positive reviews!
- Free or Low-Cost Internet
 - Need Internet?
 - If you need help with finding low-cost internet options, please call (919)-293-1133 x1018

Public Engagement

Mid-Carolina Regional Council held a public engagement event at Harnett County's Community Day where Mid-Carolina Regional Council staff were able to successfully survey 9 individuals and families for the Questionnaire and 30 individuals for the poster surveys.



What type of device, if any, do you own to connect to the internet?	
Smartphone	9
Tablet	5
Desktop	4
Laptop	6
Chromebook	1
Go to the library or organization to use device	2
Go to a friend or family members home to use device	2
Don't want to connect to the internet	-
Don't know where to go to access a device	-
What is preventing you from connecting to the internet through a service that isn't mobile?	
Internet is too expensive	3
Internet is not available	3
Don't want the internet	-

Don't know how to use the internet	-
Internet is available but does not work well enough	8
Don't have a device to connect to the internet	-
What groups do you identify with?	
Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area	6
Individuals who have immigrated	-
Incarcerated or formally incarcerated individuals	-
Individuals of a racial or ethnic minority group	3
Aging individuals (65+)	2
LGBTQI+ Individuals	3
Individuals with a language barrier (includes English learners and low levels of literacy)	-
Veterans	1
What is the primary type of internet service used at home?	
Cable Modem (Spectrum, Optimum)	21
DSL (Brightspeed, Century Link)	4
Fiber (AT&T Fiber, Google)	1
Fixed Wireless (SkyRunner, CloudWyze)	-
Satellite (HughesNet, Starlink)	2
Cellular Hotspots (AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, Mint, US Cellular)	2
None – Utilize Public Hotspots	-

Survey participants were also asked questions regarding what gaps and issues that they experience with digital inclusion:

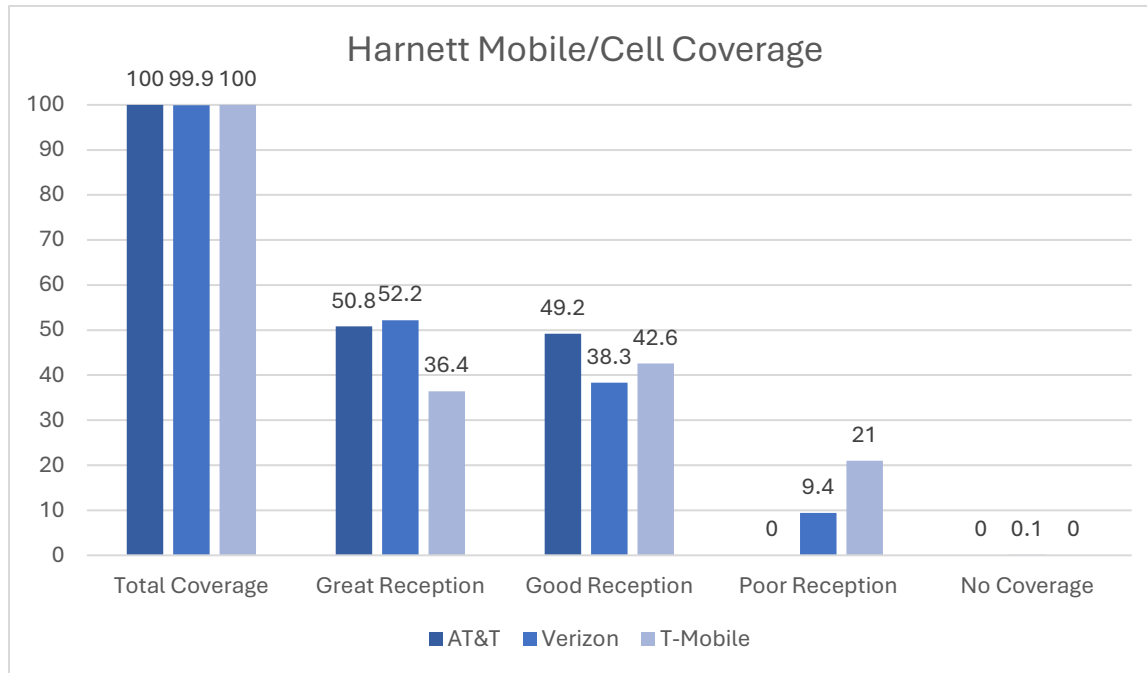
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supposed to be 10, lucky if 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell phone services – dead zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell phone services – dead zones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited fiber coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tower outages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too expensive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost too much
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat broadcasts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More fiber coverage

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor satellite service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer literacy for senior citizens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way, way too expensive for us poor folks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more than 2 ISP offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell phone services – dead zones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased prices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow dial-up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiber – power stability for internet relays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less fiber due to limited government funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedite permits for internet availability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell phone services – dead zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited internet coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor connection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hughes misrepresented (lied), raised prices to get more data and locked into contracts 	

Additional Resources

Mobile/Cell Providers

Based on data pulled from CoverageMap.com, the most prevalent mobile/cell providers in Harnett County are AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile. The highest coverage areas are in Dunn and Lillington, with coverage becoming limited in the more rural areas with the exception of along some major highways and I-95.



[Map | CoverageMap.com](http://CoverageMap.com)

Harnett County Digital Inclusion Needs Inventory

The table below illustrates Harnett County's needs relating to Digital Inclusion. A strategy to address each need, as well as the desired result of each strategy are outlined. Harnett County will be leading the charge on each identified strategy. Mid-Carolina Regional Council will assist Harnett County with implementation as needed.

Harnett County Digital Inclusion Needs Inventory		
Access		
Need	Strategy	Result
Continue to assess and collect information about served, unserved, and underserved areas.	On a quarterly basis, distribute and promote the NCDIT Broadband Survey County-wide to collect small scale data.	This will assist in acquiring broadband funding, appropriately challenging FCC data, and providing a more accurate picture of coverage availability for ISPs.
Prioritize and promote the free public Wi-Fi areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a bi-annual basis, evaluate free public wi-fi areas and explore opportunities for additional public wi-fi facilities. • On a bi-annual basis, send Community Centers and similar organizations an up-to-date list of free public Wi-Fi facilities. 	Ensure continued operations of public Wi-Fi facilities in the County are maintained and serviced, while also ensuring that the County is evaluating the need for improvements and communicating any changes to free Wi-Fi facilities to the community.
Update the inventory and map of all free public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes.	Create and regularly update an inventory and map of all free public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes.	Distribute an updated inventory and map of free public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes for use.
Identify needs of broadband and residential fiber access	Hold a meeting with electric membership cooperatives (EMC) to	Create a prioritization list for broadband and residential fiber access

	understand capacity and interest in broadband internet business.	that can be utilized in future funding opportunities to expand fiber and broadband where deemed most appropriate.
Extend hotspot subscriptions to individuals in need.	Assist in extending hotspot subscriptions to institutions and organizations that have experienced success in their implementation (community health centers, Cooperative Extension offices, libraries, etc.) through grant opportunities and notification of availability.	Inclusion of device access and internet connectivity.
Identify internet subsidy programs that will serve individuals and families in need.	Create a catalogue of all local internet subsidy programs that serve individuals and families in need of assistance.	The County will have a catalogue of all local internet subsidy programs that serve individuals and families in need of assistance. This will be available for distribution to members of the public and local organizations.
Identify and map broadband infrastructure.	Communicate with ISPs to understand the location of both Lit and Dark Fiber to best coordinate economic development potential and relay information to Economic Development	Provide broadband infrastructure in development corridors to encourage business expansion and openings.

	Commissions and Chambers of Commerce.	
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Adoption		
Need	Strategy	Result
Continue to assess and collect information about served, unserved, and underserved areas.	Distribute and promote the NCDIT Broadband Survey County-wide to collect small scale data.	This will assist in acquiring broadband funding, appropriately challenging FCC data, and providing a more accurate picture of coverage availability for ISPs
Identify future funding opportunities.	Research and identify future funding opportunities that may garner community support	Communities may be able to take advantage of funding opportunities to further support digital inclusion needs

Affordability		
Need	Strategy	Result
Financial Assistance of internet subscriptions	Communicate and coordinate with local programs and organizations to provide financial assistance for internet subscriptions and device and accessory costs.	Affordable internet subscriptions for community residents.
Provide information and assistance regarding FCC's Lifeline Program to residents.	Incorporate FCC's eligibility and application when applying for other services (e.g., Family Caregiver Support	Formation of partnerships between other government programs

	Program, SNAP/EBT, W.I.C., Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, etc.) at both the local government level and community organization level.	
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Digital Literacy		
Need	Strategy	Result
Increase awareness and training for Digital Literacy	Distribute pre-existing digital skill tutorials, webinars, and toolkits through senior centers, school systems, Town and County networks, community organizations, Agricultural Extension Offices, and beyond.	Increased awareness and training of Digital Literacy
<p>Improve digital literacy for senior populations.</p> <p>Provide 1 on 1 in-person technical assistance for older adults at senior centers, libraries, Extension Offices, and beyond.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide individualized in-person technical assistance for senior citizens at senior centers, libraries, Extension Offices, and more. • Provide quarterly digital literacy classes at local senior centers or libraries to teach basic fundamentals to senior citizens. Staffing could be provided by Campbell University students, High School students, volunteers, and beyond. Cooperative Extension 	Increase digital literacy amongst the County's Senior population, to equip them with the tools and knowledge necessary to be resilient from cyber security threats and improve their access to critical needs

	staff can undergo training in coordination with the Cooperative Extension's Broadband Access and Education Coordinator to provide in-house technical assistance.	
Promote technical assistance resources for senior populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute technical assistance resources for older adults through senior centers, area agency on aging, social services, and beyond. • Promote no-cost services such as Cyber Seniors: toll free 1-844 217-3057 and Senior Planet: 888-713-3495 	Increased awareness of free training opportunities that senior population can take advantage of to increase digital literacy.
Incorporate telehealth services and technical support in available resources.	Foster partnerships between healthcare systems and older adults to ensure they have the skills to appropriately participate in telehealth options.	Increase awareness of use and access of telehealth services for senior population.
Promote Digital Literacy for members of the North Carolina agricultural labor force and their families.	Create a community support network with the agricultural community through coordination with Cooperative Extension Offices and other agricultural entities to assist and distribute digital literacy resources that address entrepreneurship,	A community support network that will ensure that Cooperative Extension Offices maintain contact with the Cooperative Extension's Broadband Access and Education Coordinator and maximize digital inclusion opportunities

	business, agriculture, and more.	
Promote an assistance program or event for devices.	Market and promote a Device Diagnostic Day in coordination with Harnett County Library.	Individuals can receive free assistance and troubleshooting for devices such as Macs, PCs, and smartphones.
To simplify terminology for digital literacy to ensure more understanding	Ensure that all toolkits and digital literacy assistance are written at a 5th grade reading level in both English and Spanish to provide more inclusive language.	Uniform understanding of digital literacy

Device Access		
Need	Strategy	Result
Improve access and affordability to encourage ownership of devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize distribution of devices directly to individuals or families that will keep them as opposed to rental programs that create a cycle of inaccessibility. • Contract for device distributions through libraries, HUD Affordable Housing opportunities, school systems, community organizations, and individuals and families. 	Create affordable device access for individuals and families
Improve access to devices such as printers and scanners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inventory and map of facilities with devices that are like the 	Create affordable device access for small business

	<p>public Wi-Fi inventory map.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create prioritization, based on volume of usage, of facilities that need additional equipment or improvements to ensure needs are being met. 	owners, entrepreneurs, and more.
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Additional Resources		
Need	Strategy	Result
Create a clearinghouse of resources addressed in this Plan to publish on Town and County websites.	On a quarterly basis, distribute this resource to other stakeholders (e.g., libraries, senior centers, Cooperative Extensions, school systems, etc.) and ensure that information is updated and maintained regularly.	Increase awareness of resources to improve access for individuals.
Address gaps in rural health	Communicate with the NC Farmworker Health Program within the Office of Rural Health to coordinate, learn of new resources, and implement programs within the agricultural community in partnership with Town and County departments and community organizations; 800-533-8847	Availability of resources that specialize in rural health for farmworkers to utilize

Affordable, low-cost device distribution assistance	Identify and partner with local/ regional I.T. businesses to refurbish personal devices that can be donated for individuals in need.	Reduction of E-waste and provide a usable internet enabled device to individuals in need.
Digital Navigator for community	Hire a part-time or full-time digital navigator to serve as a permanent digital inclusion contact point and a reliable individual to travel accordingly within the County/Region.	Individual can aid with those in need across the county/region.
Address gaps amongst farmworkers	Gauge Cooperative Extension interest in increasing Visit NC Farms App capacity to assist farmers, growers, and producers with limited digital literacy and internet access in having an online presence.	Partnership support with the Cooperative Extension

SAMPSON COUNTY DIGITAL INCLUSION

Overview

Sampson County has a population of 59,601, according to the 2020 US Census, and is comprised of 945.7 square miles of land, making it the second largest county in North Carolina. The County is predominantly rural and faces challenges that many rural communities in the state have faced as it pertains to broadband resources and access. The County has shown growth in its Availability Index Score from 2017 to 2021, it from 56.5% to 65.1% in just four years. Additionally, there has been an increase in availability, the County has a 53.6% broadband subscription rate as of 2021 which was 47.2% in 2017.

The creation of a Sampson County Steering Committee proved to be beneficial in the creation of this plan. In addition to a representative from the Coharie Tribe, the Sampson Steering Committee was comprised of a representative from Sampson County Schools, Sampson County Aging, Sampson County Library, Sampson County Public Health, Sampson County Economic Development, and Veteran's Affairs. The steering committee met twice over the development of the plan, once in June 2024 to brainstorm digital inclusion gaps and to gain a better understanding of the county's digital inclusion environment to identify priority areas to target and in August 2024 to discuss public engagement opportunities and to identify potential solutions moving forward.

Coharie Tribe

Within Sampson County is the state-recognized Native American Indian Tribe, the Coharie Tribe. They are primarily located in Sampson and Harnett Counties and descend from the indigenous tribe of the Neusiok Indians. As of August 2024, the current tribal roll has 3,032 members. Mid-Carolina Regional Council staff reached out to members of the Coharie Tribe regarding barriers or issues tribal members may experience, however no specifics were discussed.

Nonetheless, it can be inferred from the March 2023 article "*Bridging the digital divide for Native American tribes: Roadblocks to broadband and community resilience*" that there may be some issues that Native American

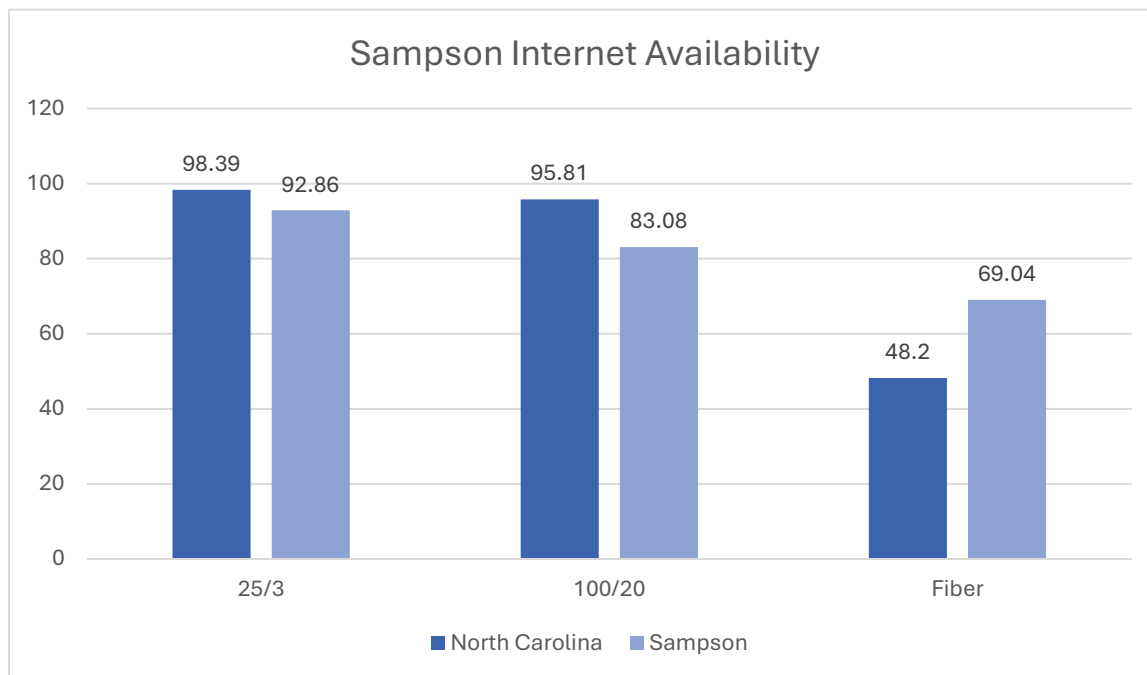
tribes may face with broadband digital inclusion. “Native American reservations are faced with a growing need for High-speed Internet and broadband access but face a variety of barriers to broadband infrastructure deployment” (Korostelina & Barrett, 2023). This article continued to explain that the three primary roadblocks are:

1. External roadblocks such as: (a) a lack of trust in the government, (b) complicated processes and time pressure, (c) an underestimation of the scope of a problem, (d) a financial burden on tribes, and (e) the federal government not recognizing tribal groups.
2. Internal challenges such as: (a) limited resources, (b) tribal social structure, (c) absence of knowledge, and (d) maintaining access.
3. Challenging geography, such as: (a) difficult terrain and (b) sacred values of land.

Access

Access refers to the ability for individuals and organizations to connect to the internet using compatible devices and the presence of at least one internet provider at an address.

In Sampson County, there is a bit of disparity between North Carolina and Sampson County's internet availability of 25Mbps/3Mbps and 100Mbps /20Mbps, however Sampson appears to be leading the way with Fiber internet connections.



Information taken from the NCDIT Website

Internet Providers

Sampson County has 17 different internet providers who offer a variety of internet services for residents to utilize and find the best option for them. The chart below is broken down by zip code and if a service provider is there.

ZIP CODES	SPECTRUM	VIASAT	EARTHLINK	HUGHESNET	BRIGHTSPEED	VERIZON	ALWAYSON	STAR COMMUNICATIONS	STARLINK	T-MOBILE HOME	US CELLULAR	OPEN BROADBAND	CLOUD WYZE	ATT FIBER	EASTERN CAROLINA BROADBAND	FOCUS BROADBAND	ATT
28318																	
28328																	
28334																	
28341																	
28344																	
28365																	
28366																	
28382																	
28385																	
28393																	
28441																	
28444																	
28447																	
28453																	
28458																	
28466																	
28478																	

Free Public Wi-Fi Locations

City	Location	Notes
Clinton	606 College St. Alternative Learning Program, 606 College St.	Clinton Schools faculty/students only (School hours)
Clinton	Butler Ave. Elementary School, 301 Butler Ave.	Clinton Schools faculty/students only (School hours)
Clinton	Clinton City Schools Administration Building, 606 College St.	Clinton Schools faculty/students only (School hours)
Clinton	Clinton High School, 340 Indian Town Road	Clinton Schools faculty/students only (School hours)
Clinton	J.C. Holliday Library Drive, 217 Graham St.	open access (6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Clinton	L.C. Kerr Elementary School, 112 Kimbrough Road	Clinton Schools faculty/students only (School hours)
Clinton	Sampson Community College, 1801 Sunset Ave.	Sampson Community College staff/students only
Clinton	Sampson Middle School (back lot), 1201 W. Elizabeth St.	Sampson Schools students only (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Clinton	Sampson Middle School (front lot), 1201 W. Elizabeth St.	Sampson Schools students only (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Clinton	Sampson Middle School, 1201 W. Elizabeth St.	Sampson Schools students only (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Clinton	Star Retail Store, 937 Sunset Ave.	open access (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)

Clinton	Star Telephone Main Office, 3900 N. U.S. 421 Highway	open access (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Clinton	Sunset Avenue Elementary School, 505 Sunset Ave.	Clinton Schools faculty/students only (School hours)
Garland	Highway 242 Grill, 13129 N. N.C. 242 Highway	open access (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Garland	Miriam B. Lamb Memorial Library, 144 S. Church Ave.	open access (Mondays: 8:15am to 5:15pm Tuesdays/Thursdays: 9:15am to 6:15pm Fridays: 8a to 5pm)
Harrells	Harrells Christian Academy, 360 Tomahawk Highway	open access (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Ivanhoe	Rowan Pentecostal Free Will Church, 20759 E. N.C. 210 Highway	open access (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Newton Grove	Bryan Memorial Library, 302 W. Weeksdale St.	open access (6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Newton Grove	Hobbton High School, 12201 Hobbton Highway	Sampson Schools students only (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Newton Grove	Midway High School, 15247 Spiveys Corner Road	Sampson Schools students only (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Roseboro	Mintz Christian Academy, 2741 Mintz Road	Mintz Christian students only (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
Roseboro	Roseboro Public Library, 300 W. Roseboro St.	open access (6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.)

Salemburg	Lakewood High School, 245 Lakewood School Road	Sampson Schools students only (8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)
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Information taken from the NCDIT Website

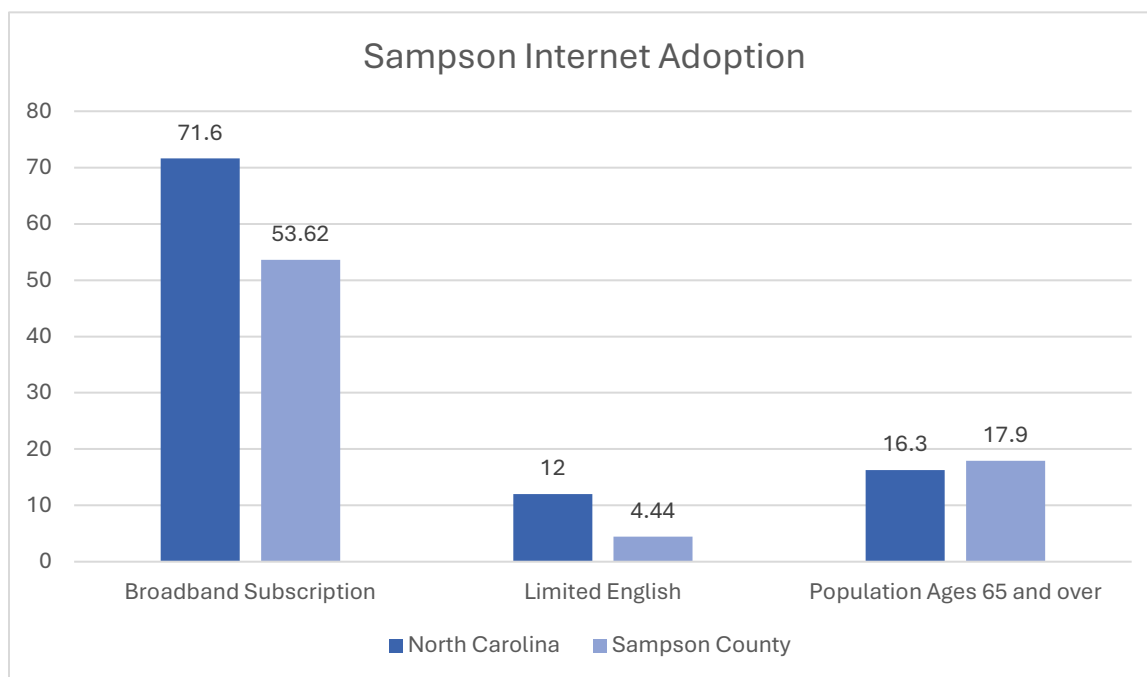
Adoption

Broadband adoption is when a household subscribes to an internet service in their home. There are many reasons for not subscribing at home, but there are four key barriers to adoption:

- The cost associated with the subscription to broadband service.
- The cost of a device to use the broadband service.
- A person's lack of existing digital literacy skills, like how to use the internet or device.
- The perceived lack of relevance or benefit to the person's life.

While the issues surrounding availability to reliable, high-speed internet is often the topic of discussions around broadband, adoption remains a substantial issue. According to the Federal Communications Commission, only 59.4% of North Carolina households subscribe to at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps. The American Community Survey found that almost 25% of households do not subscribe to any internet services at all.

Adoption obstacles in Sampson County are language barriers, older populations who need assistance, and limited coverage in the more rural areas.



Information taken from the NCDIT Website

Affordability

The affordability for individuals of all income levels to effectively subscribe to an internet service provider is vital to closing the digital gap. One of the more prevalent programs was the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP was a federal benefit program offered through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that provides a discount of up to \$30 a month for internet service subscriptions for eligible households (or up to \$75 on qualifying Tribal lands) and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a device from participating providers if more than \$10 and less than \$50 is contributed towards the purchase. Households with an income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible, in addition to households where a member is a recipient of at least one of the following: Federal Pell Grant, SNAP, Medicaid, Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, Federal Housing Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, WIC, Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits, Lifeline, Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation, Tribal Head Start.

However, as of June 1, 2024, households will no longer receive an ACP Discount due to lack of additional funding from Congress. As of June 2024, households are encouraged to contact their internet company to discuss lower cost plans and/or a low-income program option. Another option for affordable connectivity is households that may be eligible for the [FCC's Lifeline program](#), which offers up to \$9.25 a month off phone, internet, or bundled phone and internet services (up to \$34.25 if you live on qualifying Tribal lands). However, not all ACP recipients will qualify for Lifeline and not all ACP internet companies participate in the Lifeline program.

Digital Literacy

Sampson County Library, in conjunction with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, has previously offered Digital Literacy Courses on email and smartphone basics that have been temporarily placed on a pause due to too low attendance rate. However, they were able to assist 7 individuals that were 65 and older with their smartphones and tablets. This initiative was also offered in Spanish, but with no participation. Once there is more interest in the courses, they will advertise the new class dates and will work with external stakeholders to increase awareness and reach more individuals that need assistance. More information can be found [here](#).

The North Carolina Farmworker Health Program (NCFHP) offers bilingual (English/Spanish) digital literacy video playlist was created by the ECU Library of Medicine and funded by the National Library of Medicine.

- [What is Phishing?](#)
- [Staying Connected](#)
- [Staying Informed](#)
- [Telemedicine](#)

Additional resources include

- [Cyber Seniors](#) – nonprofit that provides older adults with tech-training.
- [AARP Senior Planet](#) - a community of people 60 and older who are learning to thrive in today's digital world.
- [GCFGlobal.org](#) - the GCFGlobal.org program has helped millions around the world learn the essential skills they need to live and work in the 21st century by offering self-paced online courses.
 - Available in Spanish and Português
- [Crash Course](#) – YouTube based channel that offers and produce high-quality educational videos.

Device Access

Device Access is the availability of an unrestricted and internet-enabled device; this does not include restricted homework devices.

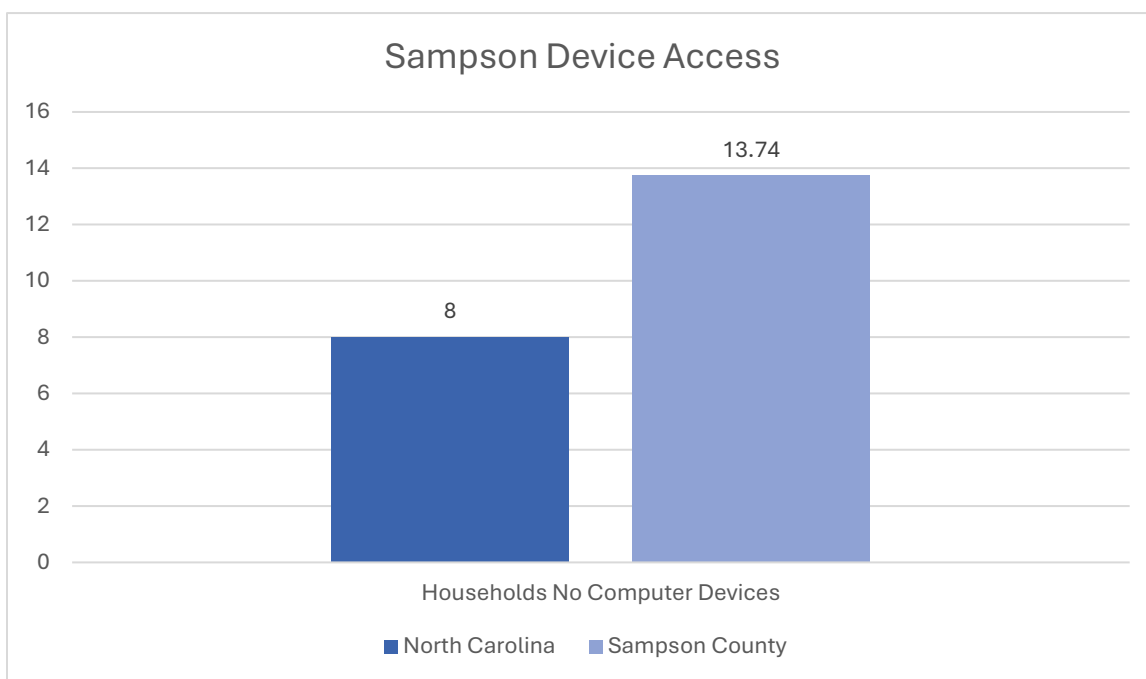
The Sampson County Library offers on-site computers for individuals to utilize and have seen these resources utilized for

- Job applications
- Amazon returns; label printing
- Personal usage such as online shopping and visiting government websites

Sampson Community College offers laptop and hotspot equipment loans for enrolled students.

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Rural Health's North Carolina Farmworker Health Program offers hotspots for farmworkers through their partners.

- Manos Unidas (Bladen, Pender, Duplin, Sampson)
- Access East (Eastern North Carolina)
- NC Farmworkers Project (Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, Franklin, Granville, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Robeson and Sampson)



Information taken from the NCDIT Website

While Sampson County does not have a program that offers free, or discounted, devices for purchase to members of the community, there are other resources and organizations that make devices readily available to individuals in need. The Kramden Institute offers a variety of programs available for K-12 students, adults, non-profits and schools, assistance with public sales and eBay, and can provide assistance with Internet accessibility.

- K-12 Students
 - Students must be in grades K-12
 - Students must not have consistent access to a working home computer
 - One computer per household unless special circumstances apply
 - Students can be nominated by a parent or educator
 - The free desktop computers come with an open-source operating system (OS) called Ubuntu. This OS comes preinstalled with over 60 apps including an offline encyclopedia and word processing applications. Tech support will be provided to the student if questions or issues with the device arise.
 - At this time, computers must be picked up from the Kramden office in Durham, NC. Kramden is not able to ship computers.
 - Those looking for assistance distributing large numbers of devices at alternative locations can reach out to Kramden to discuss options.
 - Application can be found here: [Kramden Tech Scholars Application Form](#)
- Adults
 - Kramden Institute offers the following services for eligible applicants:
 - Low-cost refurbished computers: \$30 desktops and \$70 laptops
 - 90-day warranty with all computers
 - All computers come with Windows 10 installed
 - Computers must be picked up at Kramden Institute in Durham. Shipping is not available at this time.
 - How to Apply for a Computer
 - Individuals can apply themselves. Proof of eligibility is required

- Must be a low-income adult, below 200% of the poverty level
 - OR –
 - Must be an adult enrolled in an income-based government assistance program (i.e. SNAP, Medicaid, Disability)
- Individuals can be nominated by a partner agency
 - See the [list of partner agencies here](#)
 - If your agency is not a partner, email info@kramden.org to discuss becoming one.
- Non-Profits & Schools
 - Kramden Institute is proud to present our Tech Equipment Partners program. As part of Kramden's efforts to help our community, they offer affordable, heavily discounted computer equipment to other, local non-profits, schools, religious organizations, and other institutions.
 - Refurbished Equipment
 - They can build the following to spec:
 - Desktops
 - Laptops
 - Servers
 - Network Attached Storage devices (NAS)
- Public Sales & eBay
 - Refurbished Equipment for Sale
 - Kramden has 2 easy ways to make a purchase:
 - In Person
 - They hold Surplus Computer Sales every 3-4 weeks at our office in Durham, NC. The dates are listed below. Sign up for our newsletter to see what's featured in the upcoming Surplus Computer Sales.
 - They feature a wide variety of equipment including laptops, desktops, and monitors.
 - Sales are open to the public at 5010 NC Hwy 55, Durham, NC 27713
 - All proceeds benefit our programs to bridge the digital divide.
 - Online

- Shop our eBay store. Kramden is a top-rated seller with more than 5,000 positive reviews!
- Free or Low-Cost Internet
 - Need Internet?
 - If you need help with finding low-cost internet options, please call (919)-293-1133 x1018

Public Engagement

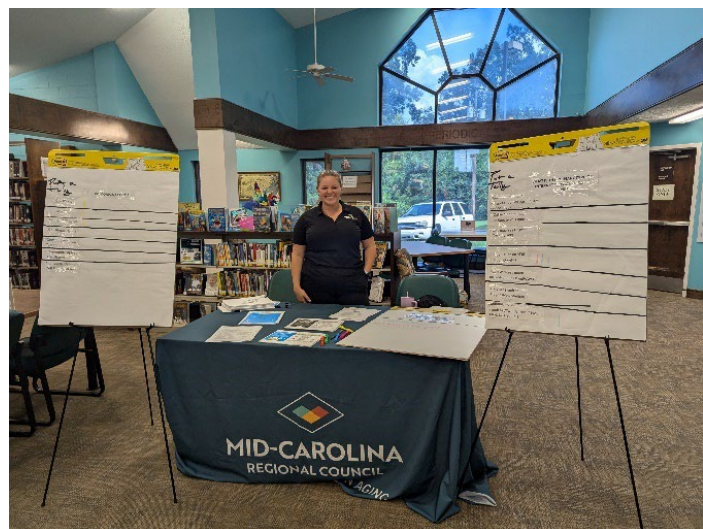
Mid-Carolina Regional Council held a public engagement event at Sampson County Library in Downtown Clinton where Mid-Carolina Regional Council staff were able to successfully survey 6 individuals and families for the Questionnaire and 6 individuals for the poster surveys.

What type of device, if any, do you own to connect to the internet?	
Smartphone	6
Tablet	5
Desktop	1
Laptop	6
Chromebook	-
Go to the library or organization to use device	-
Go to a friend or family members home to use device	-
Don't want to connect to the internet	-
Don't know where to go to access a device	-
What is preventing you from connecting to the internet through a service that isn't mobile?	
Internet is too expensive	2
Internet is not available	-
Don't want the internet	-
Don't know how to use the internet	-
Internet is available but does not work well enough	2
Don't have a device to connect to the internet	-
What groups do you identify with?	
Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area	4
Individuals who have immigrated	-
Incarcerated or formally incarcerated individuals	-
Individuals of a racial or ethnic minority group	-
Aging individuals (65+)	-
LGBTQI+ Individuals	-
Individuals with a language barrier (includes English learners and low levels of literacy)	-
Veterans	-

What is the primary type of internet service used at home?	
Cable Modem (Spectrum, Optimum)	-
DSL (Brightspeed, Century Link)	-
Fiber (AT&T Fiber, Google)	6
Fixed Wireless (SkyRunner, CloudWyze)	-
Satellite (HughesNet, Starlink)	-
Cellular Hotspots (AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, Mint, US Cellular)	-
None – Utilize Public Hotspots	-

Survey participants were also asked questions regarding what gaps and issues that they experience with digital inclusion:

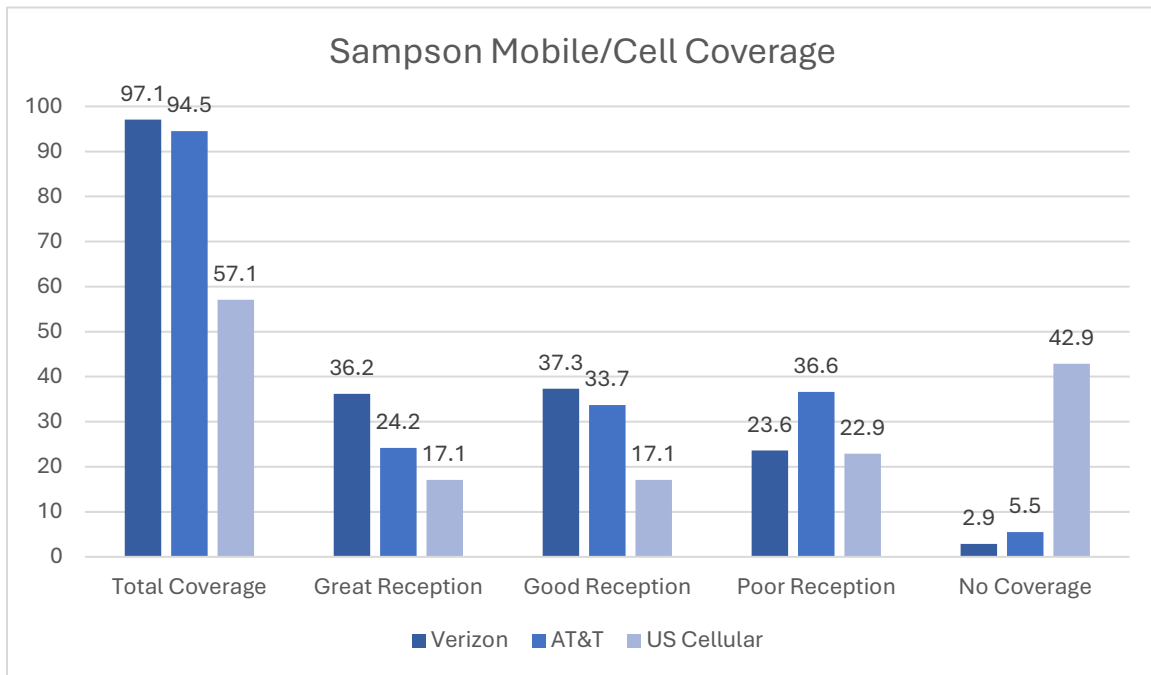
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural dead zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow, unreliable internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues with Bright speed, not a strong signal and slow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrible service, must use hotspots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hope to have Star Communications to fill gaps 	



Additional Resources

Mobile/Cell Providers

Based on data pulled from CoverageMap.com, the most prevalent mobile/cell providers in Sampson County are Verizon, AT&T, and US Cellular. The highest coverage area is Clinton, with coverage becoming quickly limited in the more rural areas with the exception of along and I-40.

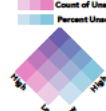


[Map | CoverageMap.com](#)

SAMPSON COUNTY BROADBAND PROFILE

Summary of broadband service in the county based on FCC reported unserved areas compared with current funding programs focusing on improving broadband in the county.

FCC Reported Unserved & Underserved Locations***



***Unserved & Underserved Locations from the FCC Broadband Data Collection have been aggregated into hexagon-shaped bins to allow both the count and percent of unserved & underserved locations within each bin. Locations that have had funds obligated through previous Federal, State or Local broadband expansion programs have been removed from the regional aggregations and county estimates. Darker shades of pink indicate higher total count of unserved & underserved locations. Darker shades of blue indicate a higher percentage of locations within a bin are unserved & underserved locations. Darker shades of purple indicate both a higher total of unserved & underserved locations and a higher percentage of total locations within a bin are unserved & underserved locations.

Unserved locations for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded programs in NC are defined as locations without access to fixed terrestrial Internet service, through Fiber, Cable, or non-mobile Licensed Fixed Wireless technologies, of at least 25mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload speeds. Underserved locations are defined as locations without access to fixed terrestrial Internet service of at least 100mb/s Download and 20mb/s Upload speeds, but greater than 25mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload speeds.

- Local Award Locations (ARPA Funded)
- GREAT Award Locations (ARPA Funded) - Contracted
- GREAT Award Locations (ARPA Funded) - Contingent
- CAB Award Locations (ARPA Funded) - Contingent
- GREAT Award Locations (State Funded)
- GREAT Award Areas (State Funded)
- FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Grant
- Other Federal Grants

SAMPSON COUNTY ESTIMATES

Percent Unserved *
(No Service 30mb/s Download and 3mb/s Upload or Greater)

10.29% 3,226 Total Locations

Percent Underserved *
(No Service 100mb/s Download and 20mb/s Upload or Greater)

0% 0 Total Locations

Percent with Fiber Broadband Available *

62.8% 19,699 Total Locations

Percent with DSL Only *

27.84% 8,733 Total Locations

Percent with Broadband Subscription **

53.62%

Percent with No Internet Access **

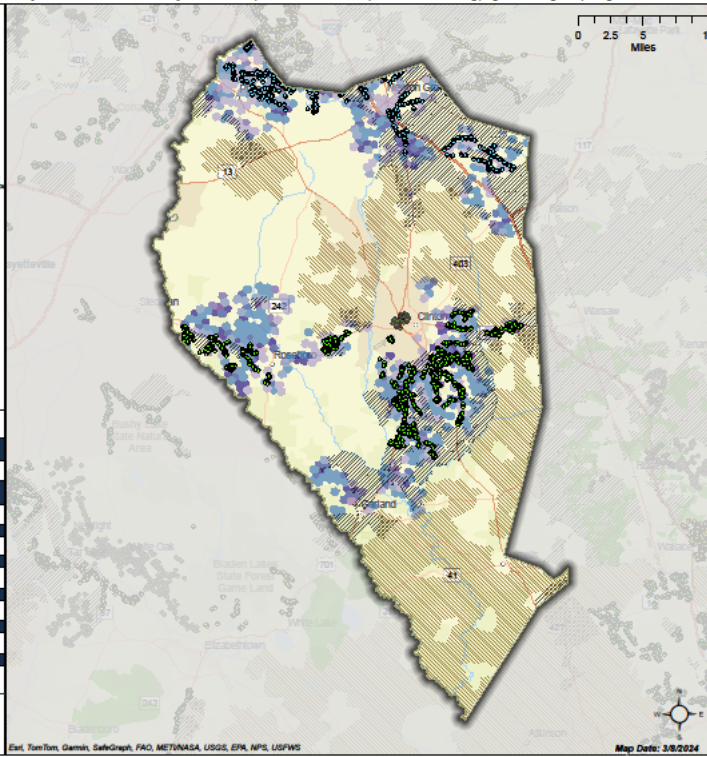
23.43%

Percent with No Internet Devices **

13.74%

DATA SOURCES:
 *FCC BDC - Federal Communication Commission Broadband Data Collection
 Version 3 Published November 2023 (Provider Reported as of June 30, 2023)
 Previously Awarded Unserved & Underserved locations have been removed.

**ACS - U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017-2021
 5-Year Estimates



Map Date: 3/8/2024

Sampson County Digital Inclusion Needs Inventory

The table below illustrates Sampson County's needs relating to Digital Inclusion. A strategy to address each need, as well as the desired result of each strategy are outlined. Sampson County will be leading the charge on each identified strategy. Mid-Carolina Regional Council will assist Sampson County with implementation as needed.

Sampson County Digital Inclusion Needs Inventory		
Access		
Need	Strategy	Result
Continue to assess and collect information about served, unserved, and underserved areas.	On a quarterly basis, distribute and promote the NCDIT Broadband Survey County-wide to collect small scale data.	This will assist in acquiring broadband funding, appropriately challenging FCC data, and providing a more accurate picture of coverage availability for ISPs.
Prioritize and promote the free public Wi-Fi areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a bi-annual basis, evaluate free public wi-fi areas and explore opportunities for additional public wi-fi facilities. • On a bi-annual basis, send Community Centers and similar organizations an up-to-date list of free public Wi-Fi facilities. 	Ensure continued operations of public Wi-Fi facilities in the County are maintained and serviced, while also ensuring that the County is evaluating the need for improvements and communicating any changes to free Wi-Fi facilities to the community.
Update the inventory and map of all free public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes.	Create and regularly update an inventory and map of all free public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes.	Distribute an updated inventory and map of free public Wi-Fi areas with corresponding attributes for use.
Identify needs of broadband and residential fiber access	Hold a meeting with electric membership cooperatives (EMC) to	Create a prioritization list for broadband and residential fiber access

	understand capacity and interest in broadband internet business.	that can be utilized in future funding opportunities to expand fiber and broadband where deemed most appropriate.
Extend hotspot subscriptions to individuals in need.	Assist in extending hotspot subscriptions to institutions and organizations that have experienced success in their implementation (community health centers, Cooperative Extension offices, libraries, etc.) through grant opportunities and notification of availability.	Inclusion of device access and internet connectivity.
Identify internet subsidy programs that will serve individuals and families in need.	Create a catalogue of all local internet subsidy programs that serve individuals and families in need of assistance.	The County will have a catalogue of all local internet subsidy programs that serve individuals and families in need of assistance. This will be available for distribution to members of the public and local organizations.
Identify and map broadband infrastructure.	Communicate with ISPs to understand the location of both Lit and Dark Fiber to best coordinate economic development potential and relay information to Economic Development	Provide broadband infrastructure in development corridors to encourage business expansion and openings.

	Commissions and Chambers of Commerce.	
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Adoption		
Need	Strategy	Result
Continue to assess and collect information about served, unserved, and underserved areas.	Distribute and promote the NCDIT Broadband Survey County-wide to collect small scale data.	This will assist in acquiring broadband funding, appropriately challenging FCC data, and providing a more accurate picture of coverage availability for ISPs
Identify future funding opportunities.	Research and identify future funding opportunities that may garner community support	Communities may be able to take advantage of funding opportunities to further support digital inclusion needs

Affordability		
Need	Strategy	Result
Financial Assistance of internet subscriptions	Communicate and coordinate with local programs and organizations to provide financial assistance for internet subscriptions and device and accessory costs.	Affordable internet subscriptions for community residents.
Provide information and assistance regarding	Incorporate FCC's eligibility and application when applying for other	Formation of partnerships between other government programs

FCC's Lifeline Program to residents.	services (e.g., Family Caregiver Support Program, SNAP/EBT, W.I.C., Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, etc.) at both the local government level and community organization level.	
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Digital Literacy		
Need	Strategy	Result
Increase awareness and training for Digital Literacy	Distribute pre-existing digital skill tutorials, webinars, and toolkits through senior centers, school systems, Town and County networks, community organizations, Agricultural Extension Offices, and beyond.	Increased awareness and training of Digital Literacy
<p>Improve digital literacy for senior populations.</p> <p>Provide 1 on 1 in-person technical assistance for older adults at senior centers, libraries, Extension Offices, and beyond.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide individualized in-person technical assistance for senior citizens at senior centers, libraries, Extension Offices, and more. • Provide quarterly digital literacy classes at local senior centers or libraries to teach basic fundamentals to senior citizens. Staffing could be provided by Sampson Community College, High School students, 	Increase digital literacy amongst the County's Senior population, to equip them with the tools and knowledge necessary to be resilient from cyber security threats and improve their access to critical needs

	volunteers, and beyond. Cooperative Extension staff can undergo training in coordination with the Cooperative Extension's Broadband Access and Education Coordinator to provide in-house technical assistance.	
Promote technical assistance resources for senior populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute technical assistance resources for older adults through senior centers, area agency on aging, social services, and beyond. • Promote no-cost services such as Cyber Seniors: toll free 1-844 217-3057 and Senior Planet: 888-713-3495 	Increased awareness of free training opportunities that senior population can take advantage of to increase digital literacy.
Incorporate telehealth services and technical support in available resources.	Foster partnerships between healthcare systems and older adults to ensure they have the skills to appropriately participate in telehealth options.	Increase awareness of use and access of telehealth services for senior population.
Promote Digital Literacy for members of the North Carolina agricultural labor force and their families.	Create a community support network with the agricultural community through coordination with Cooperative Extension Offices and other agricultural entities to assist and distribute digital literacy resources that address	A community support network that will ensure that Cooperative Extension Offices maintain contact with the Cooperative Extension's Broadband Access and Education Coordinator and maximize digital inclusion opportunities

	entrepreneurship, business, agriculture, and more.	
Promote an assistance program or event for devices.	Market and promote a Device Diagnostic Day in coordination with Sampson County Library.	Individuals can receive free assistance and troubleshooting for devices such as Macs, PCs, and smartphones.
To simplify terminology for digital literacy to ensure more understanding	Ensure that all toolkits and digital literacy assistance are written at a 5th grade reading level in both English and Spanish to provide more inclusive language.	Uniform understanding of digital literacy

Device Access		
Need	Strategy	Result
Improve access and affordability to encourage ownership of devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize distribution of devices directly to individuals or families that will keep them as opposed to rental programs that create a cycle of inaccessibility. • Contract for device distributions through libraries, HUD Affordable Housing opportunities, school systems, community organizations, and individuals and families. 	Create affordable device access for individuals and families
Improve access to devices such as printers and scanners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inventory and map of facilities with devices that are like the 	Create affordable device access for small business

	<p>public Wi-Fi inventory map.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create prioritization, based on volume of usage, of facilities that need additional equipment or improvements to ensure needs are being met. 	owners, entrepreneurs, and more.
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Additional Resources		
Need	Strategy	Result
Create a clearinghouse of resources addressed in this Plan to publish on Town and County websites.	On a quarterly basis, distribute this resource to other stakeholders (e.g., libraries, senior centers, Cooperative Extensions, school systems, etc.) and ensure that information is updated and maintained regularly.	Increase awareness of resources to improve access for individuals.
Address gaps in rural health	Communicate with the NC Farmworker Health Program within the Office of Rural Health to coordinate, learn of new resources, and implement programs within the agricultural community in partnership with Town and County departments and community organizations; 800-533-8847	Availability of resources that specialize in rural health for farmworkers to utilize

Affordable, low-cost device distribution assistance	Identify and partner with local/ regional I.T. businesses to refurbish personal devices that can be donated for individuals in need.	Reduction of E-waste and provide a usable internet enabled device to individuals in need.
Digital Navigator for community	Hire a part-time or full-time digital navigator to serve as a permanent digital inclusion contact point and a reliable individual to travel accordingly within the County/Region.	Individual can aid with those in need across the county/region.
Address gaps amongst farmworkers	Gauge Cooperative Extension interest in increasing Visit NC Farms App capacity to assist farmers, growers, and producers with limited digital literacy and internet access in having an online presence.	Partnership support with the Cooperative Extension

DIGITAL INCLUSION GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program 2024

The goal of the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program is to fund initiatives that ensure communities have the access and skills to fully participate in the digital world, regardless of their background or circumstances. This program will complement digital equity activities funded by the Capacity Grant Program.

This is the first funding opportunity from the \$1.25 billion Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program, the third of the three Digital Equity Act programs. The Digital Equity Act provides \$2.75 billion to establish three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion.

Grant Cycle

The application window opens in March and closes in May.

Who can apply?

Eligible entities include

- A political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality of a State, including an agency of a State, including an agency of a State that is responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities, or for providing public housing, in the State;
- An Indian Tribe, an Alaska Native entity, or a Native Hawaiian organization;
- A foundation, corporation, institution, or association that is a not-for-profit entity and not a school;
- A community anchor institution;
- A local educational agency;
- An entity that carries out a workforce development program; or
- A partnership between any of the entities described in paragraphs (1) through (6). 47 U.S.C. §1724(b). For additional details, check out [47 USC 1724: Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program \(house.gov\)](#).

Digital Equity Competitive Grant

The goal of the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program is to fund initiatives that ensure communities have the access and skills to fully participate in the digital world, regardless of their background or circumstances. This program will complement digital equity activities funded by the Capacity Grant Program.

This is the first funding opportunity from the \$1.25 billion Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program, the third of the three Digital Equity Act programs. The Digital Equity Act provides \$2.75 billion to establish three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion.

Grant Cycle

The application window opens in July, closes in September, and applicants are notified by December.

Who can apply?

The following entities are eligible to apply for grants under the Competitive Grant Program so long as that entity is not serving, and has not served, as the administering entity for a State under either the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program or the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program:

1. A political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality of a State, including an agency of a State that is responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities, or for providing public housing, in the State.
2. An Indian Tribe, an Alaska Native entity, or a Native Hawaiian organization (“Native Entity”).
3. A foundation, corporation, institution, or association that is
 1. a not-for-profit entity; and
 2. not a school.
4. A community anchor institution.
5. A local educational agency.
6. An entity that carries out a workforce development program.
7. A partnership between any of the entities described in paragraphs (1) through (6).

AARP Community Challenge Grant Program

Since the program's debut in 2017, AARP has awarded \$16.4 million through over 1,370 grants. This grant program is part of the AARP Livable Communities initiative and aims to help communities become more livable for individuals of any age.

Digital Connection is listed as a Project Category for the Flagship Grant category of the Community Challenge Grant.

Grant Cycle

The application window opens in January, closes in March, and applicants are notified by June.

Who can apply?

The AARP Community Challenge is open to the following types of organizations:

- 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(6) nonprofits (Nonprofit organizations must be recognized by the IRS in order to receive funds.)
- Government entities
- Other types of organizations considered on a case-by-case basis.
(Funds will not be provided to any for-profit company, nor individuals. However, AARP does allow for IRS recognized 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(6) tax-exempt non-profit organizations or government entities to serve as fiscal sponsors of grants.)

Digital Inclusion Additional Opportunities

N.C. Broadband Survey

Offered through NCDIT and the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at NC State University "The North Carolina Broadband Survey is designed to gather information on locations in the state without adequate internet access and speeds. The information gathered from the survey will:

- Provide clear data to guide investment of funds through the state's Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology grant program
- Inform research and policy recommendations
- Support strategic targeting of additional funding streams"

The survey is available in both English and Spanish and takes approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Resources:

Online Survey

[North Carolina Broadband Survey | ncbroadband.gov](http://ncbroadband.gov)

Outreach Guide and Materials:

[Broadband Survey Outreach Guide & Materials | ncbroadband.gov](http://ncbroadband.gov)

Broadband Survey Dashboard:

[Broadband Survey Dashboards | ncbroadband.gov](http://ncbroadband.gov)

No Internet Access? Text!

Text "internet" to 919.750.0553 Can't Text? Call! Call 919.750.0553

Spanish

¿Sin acceso a Internet? Textea!

Textea "internet" a 919.750.8860 Can't Text? Call! Llama a 919.750.8860

North Carolina Cooperative Extension

Through a NTIA Grant, the NC Cooperative Extension aims to increase their capacity by having at least one digital skills education in each county. NC Cooperative Extension aims to ensure that every household, business, and farm in North Carolina can EARN, LEARN, BE WELL, and LIVE WELL using digital resources. With the ongoing investment in broadband infrastructure making connectivity more widespread, NC Cooperative Extension will focus on digital literacy and skills education. Educators will serve as digital navigators, providing skills education in their counties through partnerships with community organizations such as senior centers, housing authorities, community centers, churches, or other places where people gather.

Funding for digital equity initiatives will further NC Cooperative Extension's mission to offer transformational educational opportunities. Digital equity aligns closely with the core values of the Cooperative Extension System (CES). As Ira O. Schaub, North Carolina's first Extension youth development agent, once wrote, "Extension work is a philosophy... And the satisfaction that one gets in seeing the improvement in the standard of living of the people served is the most satisfying remuneration that anyone can experience." NC Cooperative Extension's vision is to help every household, business, and farm increase their digital skills, enabling them to EARN, LEARN, BE WELL, and LIVE WELL using digital resources, ultimately leading to an improved standard of living in North Carolina.

In summary, NC State Extension's Digital Equity workers will play a crucial role in broadband adoption and utilization across the state. As our economy increasingly relies on digital delivery of services and digitally driven production and commerce, new skills will be essential for social, civic, economic participation, and health maintenance.

NC Farmworker Health Program - Interagency Office of Digital Equity & Literacy (July 2023-June 2025)

Overview and Scope:

Aiming to bridge the digital gap for rural agricultural workers, this initiative, funded by the Office of Digital Equity and Literacy, focuses on improving broadband access and digital health skills. It involves stakeholders like workers, health professionals, ISPs, and nonprofits.

Goals and Deliverables:

- Increase broadband access.
- Integrate farmworker health themes into training.
- Ensure alignment with digital inclusion plans.
- Implement broadband access plan, promote digital health training, and collaborate with inclusion plans.

NIH ComPASS: Agricultural Workers Digital Equity Initiative (September 2023-September 2033)

Project Purpose:

AWDEI aims to improve agricultural workers' access to affordable broadband for enhanced telehealth and reduced health disparities.

Phase 1: Project Initiation (Sept 2023 – Sept 2027)

- Establish Health Equity Research Assembly (HERA) and Agricultural Worker Advisory Board (AWAB).
- Conduct statewide community assessment and pilot studies guided by HERA and AWAB input.

Phase 2: Intervention Implementation (Sept 2027 – Sept 2031)

- Implement structural interventions through sub-awardees with support from HERA and AWAB.
- Conduct longitudinal survey to track internet access changes and robust monitoring and evaluation.

Phase 3: Dissemination and Sustainability (Sept 2031 – Sept 2033)

- Share results across audiences, review evaluation outcomes, and encourage stakeholder responsibility for worker wellbeing.

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved internet access leading to enhanced healthcare delivery.
- Better management of chronic conditions through telehealth.
- Increased communication efficiency in health record systems.

DIGITAL INCLUSION TERMINOLOGY

- Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP): A federal benefit program offered through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that provides a discount of up to \$30 a month for internet service subscriptions for eligible households (or up to \$75 on qualifying Tribal lands) and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a device from participating providers if more than \$10 and less than \$50 is contributed towards the purchase.
 - Households with an income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible, in addition to households where a member is a recipient of at least one of the following: Federal Pell Grant, SNAP, Medicaid, Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, Federal Housing Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, WIC, Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits, Lifeline, Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation, Tribal Head Start.
- Broadband: A type of “always on” internet connection, in contrast to dial-up. In 2015 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) set the minimum speed for broadband at 25 download/3 upload Mbps, or megabits per second, but on July 12, 2022, FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel proposed raising the limits to 100 download/20 upload Mbps.
 - What is the difference between broadband and Wi-Fi?
 - Wi-Fi is not a type of internet itself. Wi-Fi is the radio signal that is sent from a router to wireless devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.). The cable that is plugged into a router is called broadband.
 - Broadband is not exclusive to Wi-Fi; it can also include DSL (direct connection via copper phone lines) and fiber (direct connection using ultra-thin glass strands that carry light instead of electricity).
- Digital Equity: Digital equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.
- Digital Divide: The structural (the culture and social structure of a society), systemic (issues in the overall system), and sometimes geographic gap

between those who attain the principals of digital inclusion and those who do or cannot. These obstacles and issues not only result in a digital divide, but in different realities where a person not only lacks digital inclusion, but also lacks access to healthcare, housing, higher education, and beyond.

- Digital Inclusion: Digital Inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This includes five elements:
 1. Affordable, robust broadband internet service;
 2. Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user;
 3. Access to digital literacy training;
 4. Quality technical support; and
 5. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.
- Digital Navigator: Digital navigators are trusted guides who assist community members in internet adoption and the use of computing devices. Digital navigation services include ongoing assistance with affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, and application support.
- FCC: Federal Communications Commission
- Hotspots: Can be built into most new smartphones or be their own portable device. Hotspots rely on cell service to function. They do not work without cell service, which makes their coverage in certain geographic areas spotty.
 - Hotspots rely on wireless data from cellular providers to provide internet access for devices. Portable hotspots have a related subscription charge, like a monthly cell phone bill, to be able to access wireless data from cellular providers. Built-in hotspot features for smartphones and tablets rely on the device plan's data.
- NTIA: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, an agency of the United States Department of Commerce that are awarding the Digital Equity Act and Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) funding.
- Public Wi-Fi Areas: A physical space or place that offers a public Wi-Fi connection often at no cost, but in some instances for a fee. These spaces include downtown and recreational areas as well as public transit. Some places that offer public Wi-Fi include coffee shops, restaurants, and retail

stores which often comes at no cost but with the stipulation and/or pressure to purchase something from these businesses. This highlights the need for public Wi-Fi areas that are no-cost with no expectation of one being a patron to a business.

- Examples include Starbucks, local coffee shops, Target, Publix, grocery stores.

DIGITAL INCLUSION RESOURCES

NCDIT Awards by County

<https://www.ncbroadband.gov/dashboards/awards-county>

NCDIT's Awards by County dashboard is a search tool that allows local governments and citizens to view broadband and digital opportunity grants that have been awarded in their area. Local governments can utilize this tool to stay up to date on future projects to leverage funds and plan accordingly so as to best serve their communities. Citizens can utilize this tool to stay informed about upcoming digital opportunities that may benefit them.

NCDIT Resource Finder

<https://www.ncbroadband.gov/resource-finder>

NCDIT's Resource Finder is a tool that generates available resources for communities looking for help with navigating the internet and technology; finding public internet access and devices; and digital classes offered near them. A full list of resources available to Cumberland, Harnett, and Sampson Counties is listed below. This list reflects the resources available at the time of completion of this Digital Inclusion Plan. Please visit the link above for the most up-to-date information regarding digital resources available in your area.

Find Public Computers and Wi-Fi

Cumberland

- Bordeaux Branch Library
[3711 Village Dr, Fayetteville 28304](#)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Cliffdale Branch Library
[6882 Cliffdale Rd, Fayetteville 28314](#)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Cumberland County Public Library

[300 Maiden Lane, Fayetteville 28301](http://300MaidenLane,Fayetteville28301.cumberlandcountync.gov/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/library

- East Regional Branch Library
[4809 Clinton Rd, Fayetteville 28312](http://4809ClintonRd,Fayetteville28312.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Headquarters Library
[300 Maiden Ln, Fayetteville 28301](http://300MaidenLn,Fayetteville28301.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Hope Mills Branch Library
[3411 Golfview Rd, Hope Mills 28348](http://3411GolfviewRd,HopeMills28348.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- North Regional Branch Library
[855 McArthur Rd, Fayetteville 28311](http://855McArthurRd,Fayetteville28311.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Spring Lake Branch Library
[101 Laketree Blvd, Spring Lake 28390](http://101LaketreeBlvd,SpringLake28390.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- West Regional Branch Library
[7469 Century Cir, Fayetteville 28306](http://7469CenturyCir,Fayetteville28306.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library

Harnett

- Angier Public Library
[28 N Raleigh St, Angier 27546](http://28NRaleighSt,Angier27546.www.harnett.org/library)
www.harnett.org/library
- Boone Trail Recreation Center and Library
[8500 Old Hwy 421, Lillington 27546](http://8500OldHwy421,Lillington27546.www.harnett.org/library)
www.harnett.org/library

- Coats Public Library
[29 East Main St, Coats 27521](#)
www.harnett.org/library
- Dunn Public Library
[110 E Divine St, Dunn 28334](#)
www.harnett.org/library
- Erwin Public Library
[110 W F St, Erwin 28339](#)
www.harnett.org/library
- Harnett County Public Library
[455 Mckinney Parkway, Lillington, North Carolina 27546](#)
www.harnett.org/library

Sampson

- Bryan Memorial Library
[302 W Weeksdale St, Newton Grove 28366](#)
http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/
- Garland Senior Center
[91 N Church Ave 28441, Garland 28441](#)
[Garland Senior Center](#)
- C. Holliday Library
[217 Graham St, Clinton 28328](#)
http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/
- Miriam B. Lamb Memorial Library
[144 S Church Ave, Garland 28441](#)
http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/
- Roseboro Public Library

[300 W Roseboro St, Roseboro 28382](http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/)

http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/

- Roseboro Satellite Senior Center
[705 Boone Street, Roseboro, North Carolina 28328](https://www.sampsoncountync.gov/Services/Community-Support/Aging-Senior-Services/Nutrition-Sites-Senior-Centers)
<https://www.sampsoncountync.gov/Services/Community-Support/Aging-Senior-Services/Nutrition-Sites-Senior-Centers>

Find Digital Skills Help and Classes

Cumberland

- Bill Crisp Senior Center
[7560 Raeford Road, Fayetteville 28304](https://www.fcpr.us/facilities/recreation-centers/bill-crisp-senior-center)
<https://www.fcpr.us/facilities/recreation-centers/bill-crisp-senior-center>
- Bordeaux Branch Library
[3711 Village Dr, Fayetteville 28304](http://cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Cliffdale Branch Library
[6882 Cliffdale Rd, Fayetteville 28314](http://cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Community Life Developmental Center
[7828 Reaford Rd, Fayetteville, North Carolina 28304](https://cledc.org/)
<https://cledc.org/>
- Cumberland County Public Library
[300 Maiden Lane, Fayetteville 28301](http://cumberlandcountync.gov/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/library
- East Regional Branch Library
[4809 Clinton Rd, Fayetteville 28312](http://cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library

- Fayetteville Senior Center (Relocated To Senior Center East)
[917 Washington Drive, Fayetteville 28301](https://www.fcpr.us/facilities/recreation-centers/senior-center-east)
<https://www.fcpr.us/facilities/recreation-centers/senior-center-east>
- Headquarters Library
[300 Maiden Ln, Fayetteville 28301](https://cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Hope Mills Branch Library
[3411 Golfview Rd, Hope Mills 28348](https://cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- North Carolina Local News Workshop
[100 Campus Drive, Elon, North Carolina 27244](http://www.nclocalnewsworkshop.org)
www.nclocalnewsworkshop.org
- North Regional Branch Library
[855 McArthur Rd, Fayetteville 28311](https://cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- Spring Lake Branch Library
[101 Laketree Blvd, Spring Lake 28390](https://cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library
- TRJ Life Center
[4221 Black Bridge Rd, Hope Mills, North Carolina 28348](https://tjrlifecenter.org)
<https://tjrlifecenter.org>
- West Regional Branch Library
[7469 Century Cir, Fayetteville 28306](https://cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library)
cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library

Harnett

- Angier Public Library
[28 N Raleigh St, Angier 27546](https://www.angiernc.gov/287546)

www.harnett.org/library

- Boone Trail Recreation Center and Library
[8500 Old Hwy 421, Lillington 27546](#)
www.harnett.org/library
- Coats Public Library
[29 East Main St, Coats 27521](#)
www.harnett.org/library
- Dunn Public Library
[110 E Divine St, Dunn 28334](#)
www.harnett.org/library
- Erwin Public Library
[110 W F St, Erwin 28339](#)
www.harnett.org/library
- Harnett County Public Library
[455 Mckinney Parkway, Lillington, North Carolina 27546](#)
www.harnett.org/library
- North Carolina Local News Workshop
[100 Campus Drive, Elon, North Carolina 27244](#)
www.nclocalnewsworkshop.org

Sampson

- Bryan Memorial Library
[302 W Weeksdale St, Newton Grove 28366](#)
http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/
- C. Holliday Library
[217 Graham St, Clinton 28328](#)
http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/

- Miriam B. Lamb Memorial Library
[144 S Church Ave, Garland 28441](http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/144%20S%20Church%20Ave,%20Garland%2028441)
http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/
- North Carolina Local News Workshop
[100 Campus Drive, Elon, North Carolina 27244](http://www.nclocalnewsworkshop.org/100%20Campus%20Drive,%20Elon,%20North%20Carolina%2027244)
www.nclocalnewsworkshop.org
- Roseboro Public Library
[300 W Roseboro St, Roseboro 28382](http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/300%20W%20Roseboro%20St,%20Roseboro%2028382)
http://www.sampsonnc.com/departments/library_services/
- Roseboro Satellite Senior Center
[705 Boone Street, Roseboro, North Carolina 28328](https://www.sampsoncountync.gov/Services/Community-Support/Aging-Senior-Services/Nutrition-Sites-Senior-Centers/705%20Boone%20Street,%20Roseboro,%20North%20Carolina%2028328)
https://www.sampsoncountync.gov/Services/Community-Support/Aging-Senior-Services/Nutrition-Sites-Senior-Centers
- Sampson County Cooperative Extension, Digital Skills Educator
[55 Agriculture Pl, Clinton, NC 28328](https://communitydevelopment.ces.ncsu.edu/2024/06/digital-skills-educators-our-people-our-places/55%20Agriculture%20Pl,%20Clinton,%20NC%2028328)
<https://communitydevelopment.ces.ncsu.edu/2024/06/digital-skills-educators-our-people-our-places/>

Get a Computer or Device

Cumberland

- Community Life Developmental Center
[7828 Reaford Rd, Fayetteville, North Carolina 28304](https://cledc.org/7828%20Reaford%20Rd,%20Fayetteville,%20North%20Carolina%2028304)
<https://cledc.org/>
- State of Nc, Dept of Commerce, Workforce Solutions, NCWorks Career Center-Cumberland
[490 N Mcpherson Church Road, Fayetteville, North Carolina 28303](http://www.NCWorks.gov/490%20N%20Mcpherson%20Church%20Road,%20Fayetteville,%20North%20Carolina%2028303)
www.NCWorks.gov

Computer Skills Self-Paced Guide Toolkit

Essentials/Basics

Are you looking to learn computer basics and skills? Existing lessons and programs will help you learn the essentials and dive deeper into specific technology topics. Here are some popular websites that can be great resources:

- [Northstar Digital Literacy](#)
- [GCFGlobal](#)
- [Digital Skills Library](#)

When you click on the link, you will be taken to a webpage with a group of lessons on that specific topic. You can use your computer, tablet, or even your phone to access any of these lessons and start learning today.

- Computer Basics:
 - [Northstar Digital Literacy](#): “Basic Computer Skills”
 - [GCFGlobal](#): Computer Basics and Tutorials
 - [Digital Skills Library](#): “Gateway Skills”
- Computer Software:
 - [GCFGlobal Windows Tutorials](#)
 - [Digital Skills Library](#)
- Email 101:
 - [Northstar: Using Email Lesson](#)
 - [GCF Email Tutorials](#)
 - [Digital Learn](#): Intro to Email
 - [Digital Skills Library](#) - Email Lessons
- Internet Browsing 101:
 - [GFC Internet Tutorials](#)
 - [Digital Skills Library – Information Skills](#)

Intermediate

Are you looking for lessons to level up your skills? See intermediate computer skills topics from a few different resources.

When you click on the links, you’ll be taken to a webpage with a group of lessons on that specific topic. You can use your computer, tablet, or even your phone to access any of these lessons and start learning today.

- Google Workspace:
 - [DigitalLearn Google Tools](#)

- [GCFGlobal Google Tutorials](#)
 - [Google – Workspace Training](#)
- Microsoft Office Suite:
 - [Northstar Digital Literacy - Microsoft Word](#)
 - [GCFGlobal Microsoft Office Tutorials](#)
 - [Microsoft Office Suite Training](#)
 - [Microsoft 365 Training](#)
- Staying Safe Online:
 - [GCFGlobal Online Safety Tutorial](#)
 - [National Cybersecurity Alliance Resources](#)
- General Digital Skills: [GCFGlobal](#)

Advanced

Are you looking to learn advanced computer skills? The resources below will help you progress your digital skills and get specialized skills to grow your career and open up even more new opportunities.

[AARP Learn](#)

AARP is here to help connect you to the resources and information to help you make decisions that are right for YOU! Click on the “MY LEARNING LIBRARY” button to see all the virtual and self-paced classes AARP has to offer.

[Code Academy](#)

From building websites to analyzing data, the choice is yours. No matter your experience level, you'll be writing real, working code in minutes. Example classes: Java, Python, HTML and several other programming languages.

[GCFGlobal](#)

With GCFGlobal’s Skills for Today, you’ll discover some advanced topics such as how wearables work, learn how the sharing economy and the freelance world function, and get tips on protecting yourself from credit card scams, Internet trolls, ransomware, and more.

[HP LIFE](#)

Free, skills-training program for entrepreneurs, business owners, and lifelong learners all over the world. Click either the “Join for Free” or “Enroll Now” to create your new profile and get started today! (offline capabilities, multiple languages, certificates of completion).

[Trans Tech Social Link](#)

Free Membership and access to our jobs board, community workshops, classes and events. Additionally, our members gain access to schedule meetings with peer coaching and mentorship, assistance in job readiness development, and courses on.

Low-Cost Internet Service Provider (ISP) Programs

Internet Provider	Program	Offer	Needed to qualify	More info
AT&T	AT&T Access	\$5 to \$10 per month, depending on the plan for 10 Mbps	At least one person in your household must participate in SNAP	AT&T Access Website
Spectrum	Internet Assist	\$14.99 for 12 months, up to 30 Mbps	New Spectrum customers with at least one person in the home participating in specific public assistance programs	Spectrum Internet Assist Website
Comcast Xfinity	Internet Essentials	\$9.95 per month, up to 50 Mbps	New Xfinity customers who are eligible for public assistance programs	Internet Essentials - Affordable Internet from Xfinity
Cox	ConnectAssist	\$30 per month for up to 50 Mbps	Eligible for households enrolled in government assistance programs based on income, like SNAP or Medicaid	Affordable Internet Options from Cox Low-Cost Internet
MediaCom	Connect2Compete	\$9.95 per month for up to 50 Mbps	Eligible for new Mediacom customers with a K-12 student in the household who is part of the National School Lunch Program	MediacomCable - Xtream Connect Affordable High-Speed Internet

Budget Friendly Cell Phone Providers

- Visible by Verizon: Visible is a digital wireless service that operates as a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) owned by Verizon. It offers simple, easy-to-understand cell phone plans with unlimited talk, text, and data.
 - Visible Plan: For \$20 per month, you get unlimited data, talk, and text, including 5G/4G LTE speeds, and unlimited hotspot usage.
 - Visible+ Plan: For \$35 per month, this plan includes unlimited premium data on Verizon's 5G Ultra Wideband network, faster hotspot speeds, smartwatch service, and international calling benefits.
- Metro by T-Mobile: aims to provide affordable wireless service with the benefits of T-Mobile's extensive network coverage and additional perks that enhance the value of their plans.
 - \$25/mo.: Unlimited 5G data with AutoPay (or \$30/mo. without AutoPay) when you bring your phone and number.
 - \$30/mo.: 5GB of high-speed data.
- Tello: Tello is a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) that provides affordable prepaid wireless services. Tello aims to deliver a straightforward and economical wireless experience, making it a popular choice for those looking to save on their mobile phone bills.
 - Cost-Effective: Tello's plans are known for being budget-friendly, with options ranging from \$5 to \$39 a month, providing a variety of choices for different data needs and budgets.
 - \$10/mo.: Unlimited 5G plan with unlimited talk and text.
- Mint Mobile: Mint Mobile is a wireless service provider known for its affordable plans. Acquired by T-Mobile.
 - Options ranging from 5GB to unlimited data.
 - MINT 55+ plan, which is a low-cost cell phone plan exclusively for those 55 and up.
 - \$15/mo.: Unlimited 5G plan of data.
- Boost Mobile: Boost Mobile offers a variety of phone plans and new phones. Boost Mobile operates on its own 5G network as well as using T-Mobile and AT&T's networks to provide service.
 - Unlimited Plans starting at \$25/month with 30GB of premium data, and after exceeding this limit, the speed is reduced to 512kbps.

- Unlimited+ plan at \$50/month with 40GB of premium data.
- Unlimited Premium plan for \$60/month.
- \$8.33/mo.: Unlimited talk and text with data options ranging from 1 GB to unlimited.
- Consumer Cellular: Consumer Cellular is a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) that provides cell phone plans and services. They are known for their affordable plans, no-contract services, and AARP discounts, catering especially to seniors but also appealing to customers of all ages.
 - Plans: They offer plans starting at just \$20 a month for unlimited talk and text plus 1GB of data.
- Cricket Wireless: Cricket Wireless is a provider of prepaid no-contract cell phone plans. Cricket Wireless is owned by AT&T and serves around ten million subscribers in the United States
 - A variety of services such as free 5G phones when you switch to their \$60/mo. voice plan, and various deals on devices like the iPhone 11 and Motorola razr.
 - They are known for their straightforward pricing with no annual contracts and no credit checks, operating on a fast 5G network.
- Google Fi Wireless: Google Fi Wireless is a phone service provided by Google that offers flexible plans with coverage over 5G and 4G LTE networks. It's known for its integration with various devices, including Android phones, iPhones, and certain smartwatches.
 - Flexible Plans: You can choose from different plans such as Simply Unlimited, Unlimited Plus, and Flexible to suit your needs.
 - Plans for 2 individuals range from \$35/mo to \$110/mo.

DIGITAL INCLUSION REFERENCES

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