DIGITAL EQUITY IN ARLINGTON

ARLINGTON
VIRGINIA

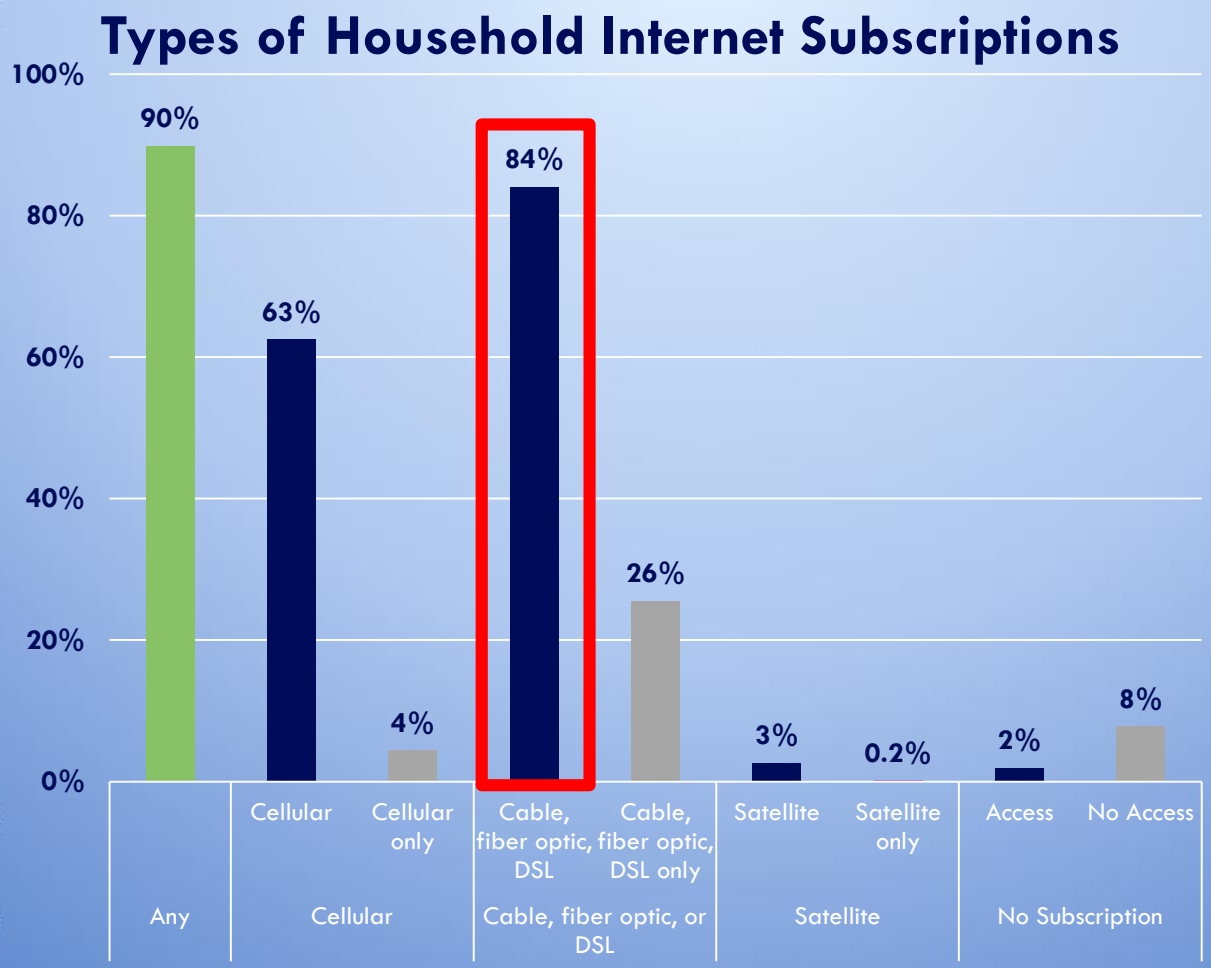
DIGITAL INCLUSION NETWORK

DECEMBER 3, 2019

PURPOSE OF MEETING

- Digital Equity Overview
- Share Planning Efforts
  - Digital Equity Framework Proposal
  - Implementation Efforts
- Respond to Questions

DIGITAL DIVIDE IN ARLINGTON



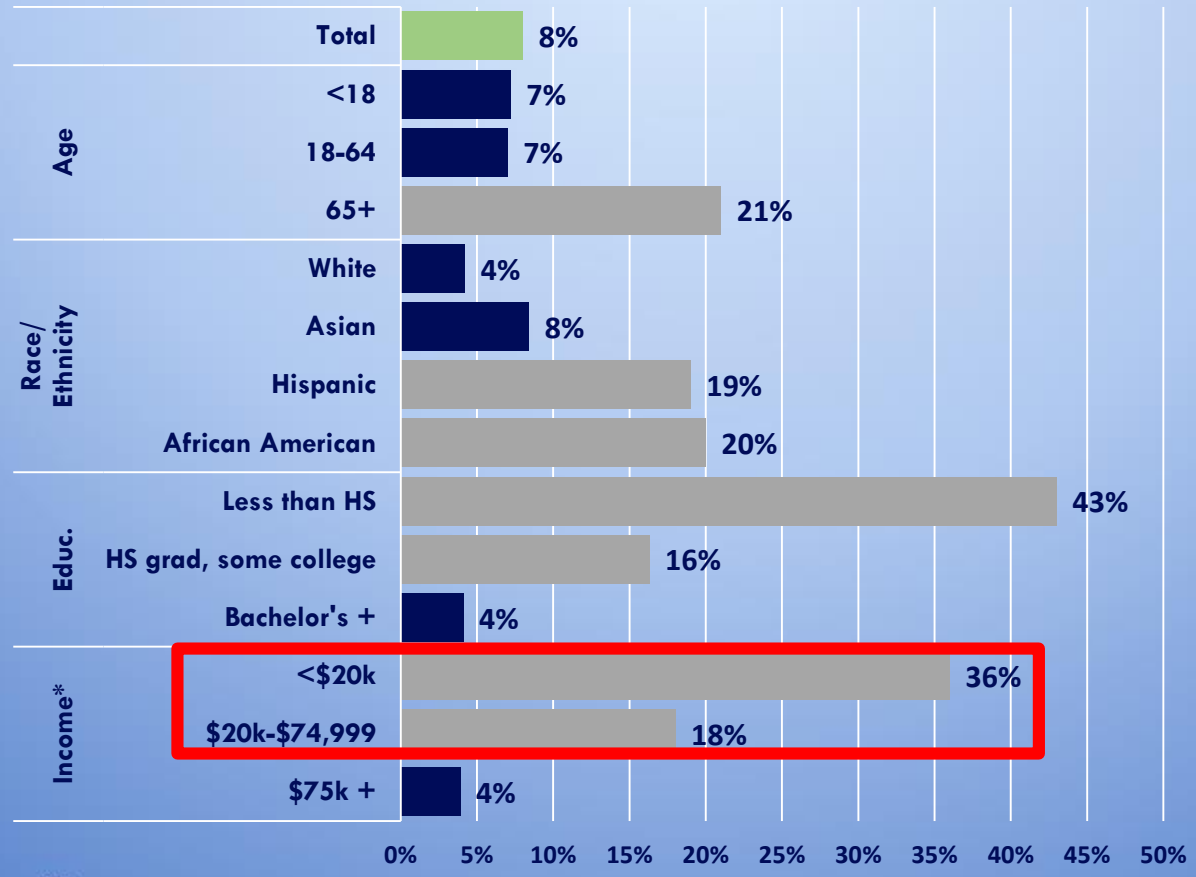
*Total households without internet only

- **90%** of Arlington households have some type of internet subscription.
- **16%** of households do not have access to a fixed home broadband internet connection (cable, fiber optic or DSL).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's [2013-2017] American Community Survey 5-year estimates

DIGITAL DIVIDE IN ARLINGTON

Internet Subscription Disparities



*Total households without internet only

- **8%** of total population did not have an internet subscription in their home.
- **Residents at greater risk:**
  - Older adults(65+)
  - African American and Hispanic individuals
  - With less than a high school education
  - Low-income
- **54%** of households lacking a home internet subscription make less than $75k

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's [2013-2017] American Community Survey 5-year estimates

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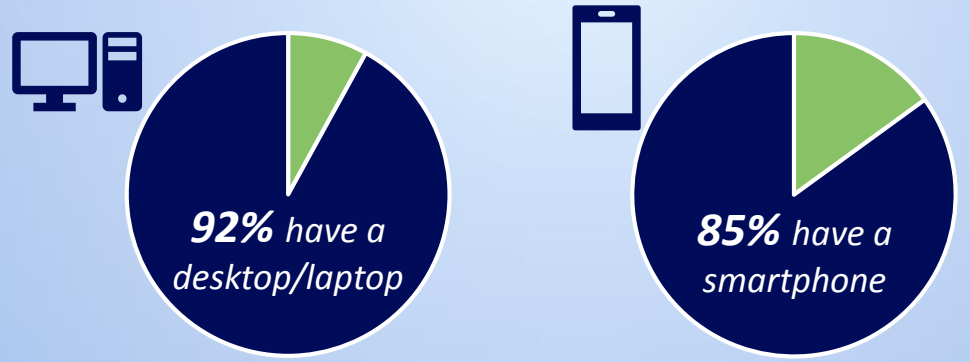


- **95%** of households have one or more computing devices.
- Households can be represented in more than one graph if they own more than one computing device.
  - Ex: household owns a desktop and a smartphone.

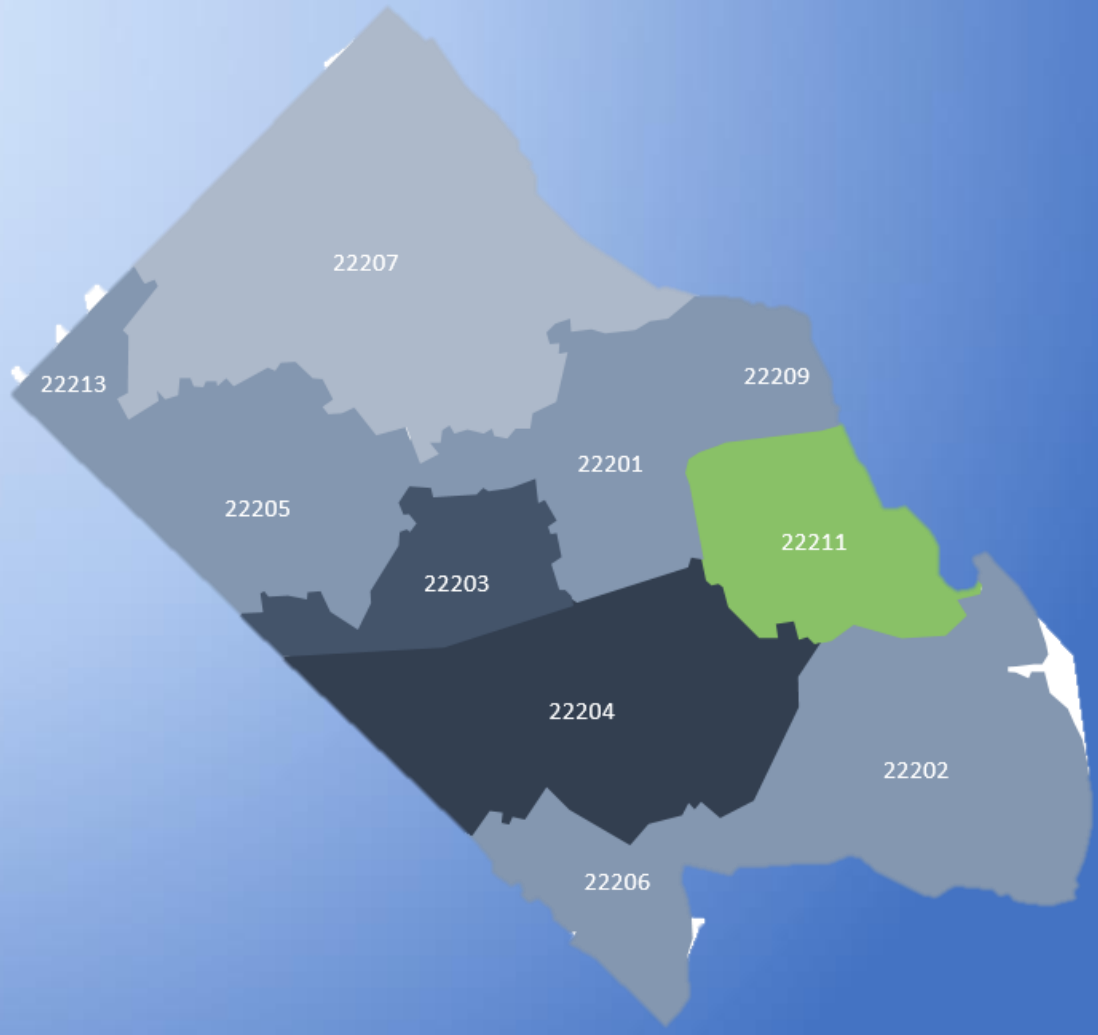
Source: U.S. Census Bureau's [2013-2017] American Community Survey 5-year estimates

WHERE DOES THE DISPARITY EXIST?

Households in certain zip codes are at a greater risk reporting no internet subscription.

- Arlington: 10%
- 22204: 17%
- 22203: 15%
- 22206: 9%

Census tracts with the lowest fixed home broadband adoptions rates correlate to Arlington's low- and moderate- income neighborhoods (Buckingham, Nauck, Columbia Heights West, Douglas Park, Columbia Forest)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau's [2013-2017] American Community Survey 5-year estimates

WHAT IS CONSIDERED "AFFORDABLE"?

- The Alliance for Affordable Internet recommends "1 for 2" target: 1GB of data (for internet, phone, other telecommunications) priced at 2% or less of average monthly income.*
  - 2% of average monthly income for family earning $75,000 (roughly 60% AMI) annually in Arlington is $125 per month
- National Digital Inclusion Alliance affiliates who have researched the question estimate people are comfortable paying $10 - $15 a month for broadband with no data caps.

*Global definition created by Alliance for Affordable Internet.

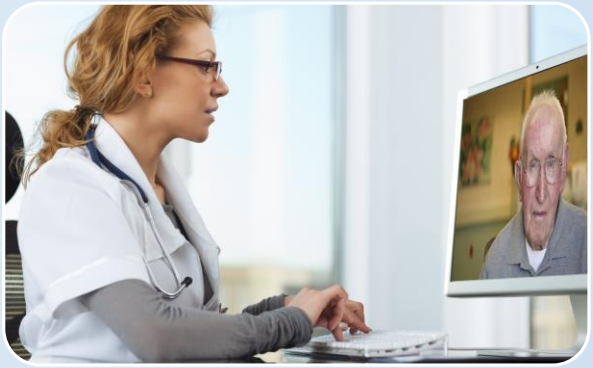
WHY IS DIGITAL EQUITY IMPORTANT?

Access to the internet and digital connectivity enables residents to:

- Complete schoolwork online
- Access healthcare resources
- Communicate with friends and family
- Research and apply for jobs
- Work remotely
- Make appointments
- Public safety awareness
- Participate in civic engagement
- Pay bills online

BENEFITS OF DIGITAL EQUITY

United States Census 2020



The 2020 Census is online first, but 16% of Arlington residents do not have high speed broadband. Increased opportunities for internet access will support more accurate counting for the Census and ensure that all Arlington residents are counted.

70% of teachers assign homework to be completed online, yet many Arlington families, particularly lower-income families, do not have high-speed broadband at home. Students without home broadband are often forced to use the internet at school afterhours, or at the public library, or at their friend's house or even the McDonalds parking lot, placing these students at an even greater disadvantage compared to their peers, also known as the homework gap.

Currently, 76% of U.S. hospitals connect with patients and practitioners through the use of video and other technology. However, broadband adoption continues to be one of the barriers to wide adoption of telehealth technologies. Connecting more Arlington residents to the internet and informing residents of the benefits of telehealth opportunities could save time and money, reduce patient transfers, decrease emergency department and urgent care center visits, and deliver savings to both the County and residents.

ONGOING ARLINGTON DIGITAL EQUITY INITIATIVES

Arlington has several Digital Equity initiatives in place…

- Free wireless internet access at 20 public libraries and community centers
- Free computer access at 11 library and community center locations. All computers used 100% of the time at most libraries.
- Free digital literacy, basic computer, productivity application, programming, and one-on-one training opportunities through Libraries, DHS, APS, and DPR
- Arlington Mill Residences pilot program
- APS students in grades 2-12 given a device

…but are there other opportunities?

CAN ARLINGTON DO MORE?

- Communities are adopting digital equity plans:
  - Portland, Oregon
  - Seattle, Washington
  - Austin, Texas
  - Kansas City, Missouri
  - Charlotte, North Carolina
  - Louisville, Kentucky
- Communities are leveraging a municipal-owned broadband network to connect residents or operate open access networks, some directly and others contracted through an ISP:
  - Chattanooga, Tennessee
  - Wilson, North Carolina
  - Sandy, Oregon
  - Ammon, Idaho
- Communities are leveraging municipal assets such as conduit systems or broadband networks to serve a public benefit, such as digital equity:
  - Boston, Massachusetts
  - Lincoln, Nebraska
  - Saint Louis, Minnesota
  - Huntsville, Alabama

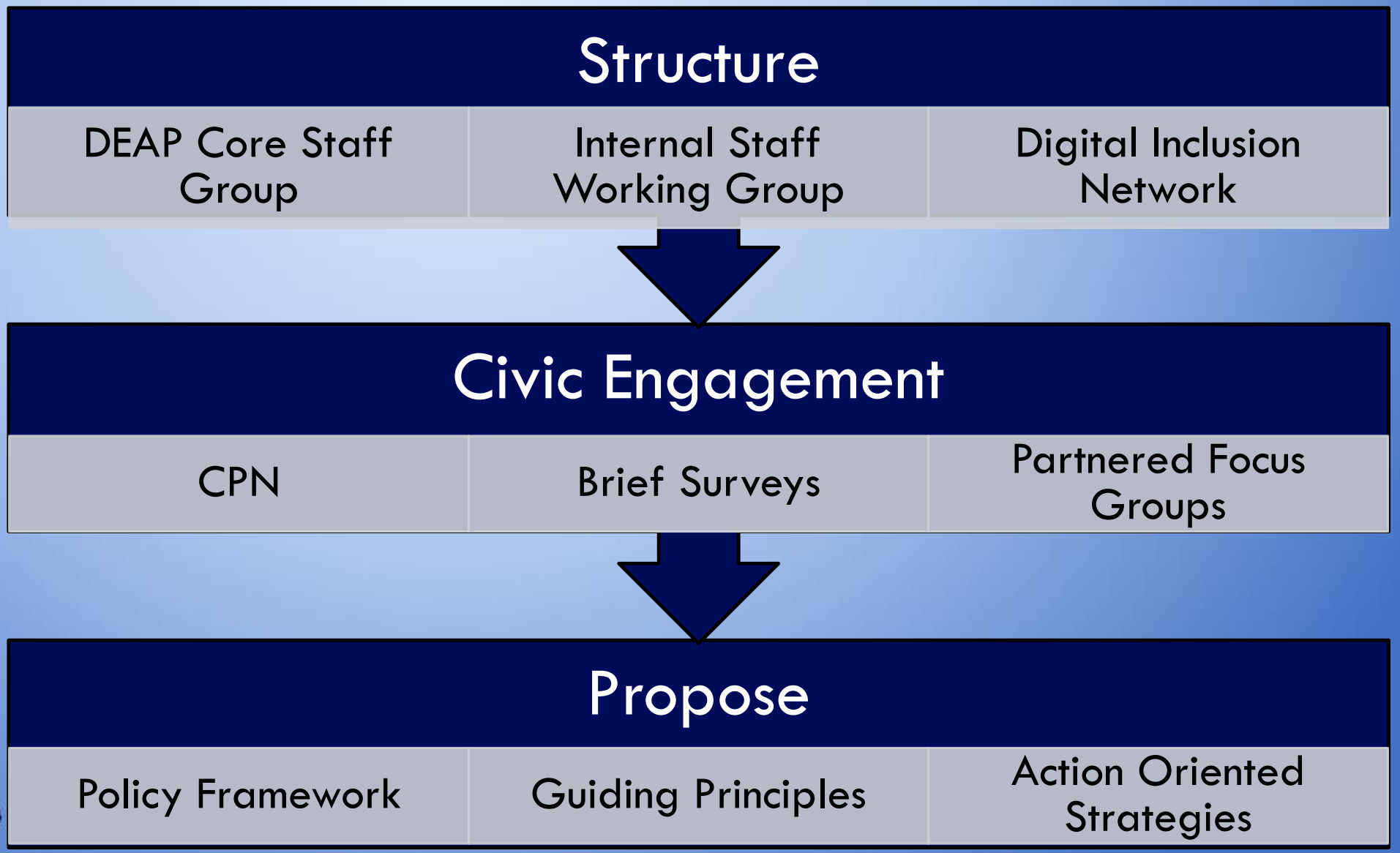
PROPOSED APPROACH

- Digital Equity Action Plan Proposal
  - Establish a policy framework, set guiding principles, and strategies for achieving Arlington's digital equity goals
  - Proposed 9 to 12-month planning process to culminate in Digital Equity Action Plan, to be adopted by County Board
- Implementation Efforts
  - Prioritize, manage, and execute identified implementation efforts

ARLINGTON'S VISION FOR DIGITAL EQUITY

- **All Arlingtonians have the information technology capacity needed to fully participate in the community and economy.**

Strategies will address:

- **CONNECTIVITY**: Arlington residents are able to connect to affordable broadband internet.
- **ACCESS**: All residents can access the internet with a device.
- **EDUCATION & TRAINING**: Residents have the appropriate digital skills necessary to be successful on the internet.
- **PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY & COMMUNITY CAPACITY**: Arlington's strategies to achieve its digital equity goals are sustainable and the community is engaged on the issue.

DIGITAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN HIGHLIGHTS