Making the Most of Bridging the Divide

Interested in the resources mentioned in Getting Virginia Across the Broadband Finish Line with Affordability & Adoption? Here are some suggestions from our session planners. Please share others you may be aware of!

- Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan: The Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan is a first-of-its-kind undertaking to assess all facets of the digital divide in the Commonwealth and develop a strategy to close it. The plan, which studies and outlines how the Commonwealth will close the digital divide focuses on three areas that form this gap in connectivity: access, affordability, and adoption. https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/DocX/vati/dop-appendix-files/virginia-digital-opportunity-plan.pdf

- Digital Opportunity Website: The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, DHCD, has been authorized by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, NTIA, to facilitate the Digital Equity Act Program. This website will be updated regularly with Digital Opportunity grant programs and resources surrounding broadband planning and capacity building. https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/digital-opportunity

- Commonwealth Connection: Commonwealth Connection is a powerful tool developed by Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and Virginia Tech that allows Virginians to discover broadband in their neighborhood and filter specific details. The information is 100% based on information submitted by internet service providers (ISPs) in Virginia. https://commonwealth-connection.com/

- Library of Virginia Library Development and Networking Division (LDND): Based in the Library of Virginia, LDND staff provide support to the 93 public library systems in the Commonwealth, including e-rate, state aid to libraries, training, statewide digital collections, and technical assistance. If you need help connecting with your local public library, reach out to LDND staff for assistance. Staff are also available to discuss state-wide projects and collaborations. https://vpl.lib.va.us/ldnd-staff/.

    o Through it's statewide digital collections, LDND provides two resources that support digital learning and bridge the digital divide: Universal Class and JobNow. **Universal Class** offers self-paced online learning on over 500 topics, including basic computer literacy, Microsoft Office skills, and career training. **JobNow** offers live career and interview coaching including help with Microsoft Office, self-paced computer training, resources for adult learners, including High School equivalency preparation, and test prep resources, practice tests, and career credentialing information for over 140 specific careers. Both resources are

available with a public library card to all Virginians through their local library, which can be found using LDND's Virginia Public Library Directory.

- o [Virginia Public Library Directory](#) : Collaborations with city and county agencies, non-profit organization, and philanthropy strengthen essential networks and builds capacity among libraries and other social infrastructure to serve learners and job seekers. To find a library by county click on the county or city name. Regional libraries will be listed under their counties or cities name. http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/libraries.asp.

- [Digital Learn Training](#): Curated by the Public Library Association, Digital Learn training is a collection of self-directed tutorials for end-users to increase their digital literacy. Modules are video based with narration, 6 to 22 minutes long, written at the fourth-grade reading level, and help learners practice skills like using a mouse and setting up passwords. Nearly all modules are available in Spanish as well as English.

- [Broadband affordability options that are available post-ACP](#) (Albemarle County Broadband and Accessibility Office): Keeping households informed about their broadband options is important in all cases, but especially with ACP eligible households. Organizations like the National Digital Inclusion Alliance maintain [lists](#) of low-cost plans, but a local context is important. Our office has developed a [list](#) of low-cost plans for providers serving our area, and includes local context. These details provide digital navigators a single resource to be able to review options for eligible households.

- [Affordability Connectivity Program (ACP) Bridge](#) (Albemarle County Broadband and Accessibility Office): Model policies and white papers serve as roadmaps for implementing new initiatives in local government. With the importance of broadband affordability made evident by the pandemic, our office began months long efforts to develop an affordability benefit for local households that supplemented the federal Affordable Connectivity Program. That work is compiled in this white paper for other localities to use. Though the federal program is down, we remain committed to broadband affordability and are exploring ways to restructure the program in in an expanded role.