Leadership Challenge:

The Digital Equity Toolkit for Rural Communities in CA

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CALIFORNIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The Team

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Today, we will cover:

Introduction, Community Partnerships

Goals, and Case Studies

Our Asks and Q&A

POP QUIZ: How many people do not have broadband access in rural communities in the United States?

A. 10 million
B. 2 million
C. 14 million
D. 100 million

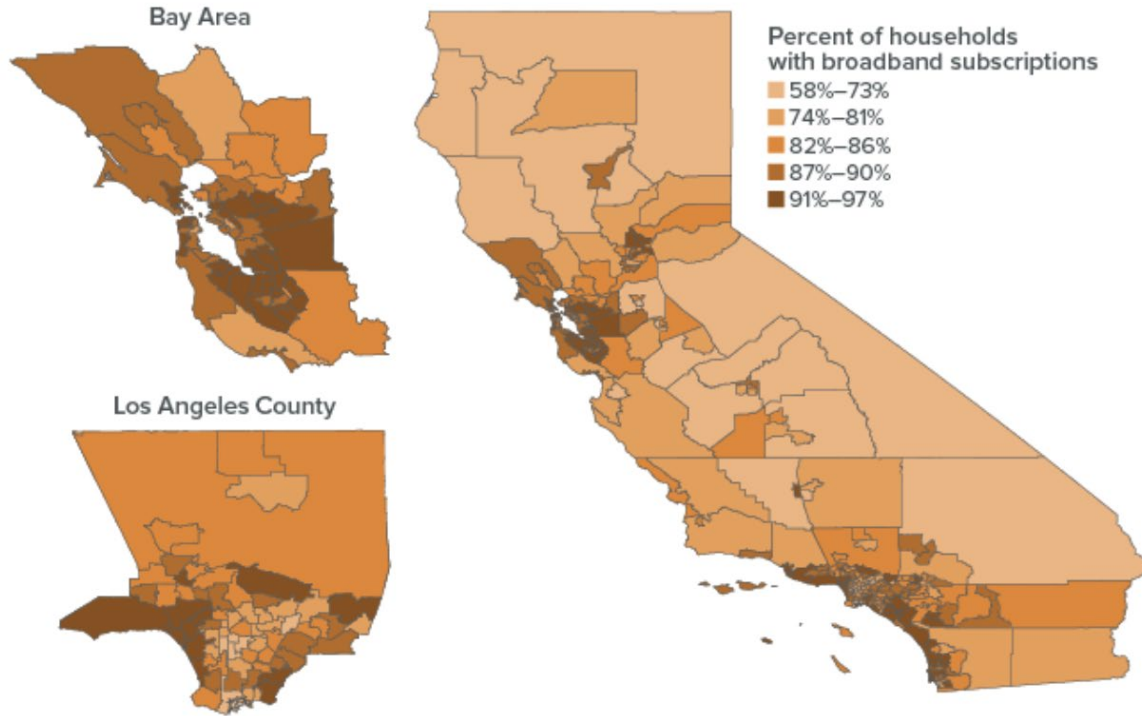PLEASE SHARE YOUR GUESSES IN THE CHAT BOX.

(C). 14 million

do not have broadband access in rural communities in the US.

In general, 42+ million cannot afford broadband access in the US & there are 227,000+ unserved households in rural areas in California (2020).

Sources: https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/eighth-broadband-progress-report#:~:text=Notwithstanding%20this%20progress%2C%20the%20Report,lack%20access%20to%20this%20service.

https://lao.ca.gov/handouts/education/2020/Broadband-Internet-Access-for-Distance-Learning-101420.pdf

Rural areas tend to have the lowest broadband rates

Bay Area

Los Angeles County

Percent of households with broadband subscriptions
- 58%–73%
- 74%–81%
- 82%–86%
- 87%–90%
- 91%–97%

SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2019; PULSE Household Survey.

NOTES: Areas shown are Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs), geographic regions that the US Census Bureau has defined for disseminating statistical information about the population. Each PUMA is built on its constituent census tracts and surrounding county or counties, and contains at least 100,000 people. Therefore, rural or lightly populated PUMAs have larger area, while urban, densely populated PUMAs are small.

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1.

Introduction and Community Partnerships

Introduction

What is the information age?

What are the benefits of information technology?

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

What is digital equity?

Why is digital equity necessary?

How does digital equity benefit society?

Geographic Areas and Rural Data
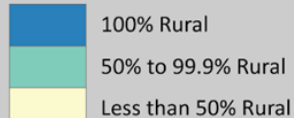
County Rurality

Counties can be categorized into levels of rurality based on the percentage of the decennial census population living in the rural areas. Using 2010 Census data, counties were classified as "mostly urban" (less than 50 percent of the population lived in rural areas), "mostly rural" (50 to 99.9 percent of the population lived in rural areas), and "completely rural" (100 percent of the population lived in rural areas).

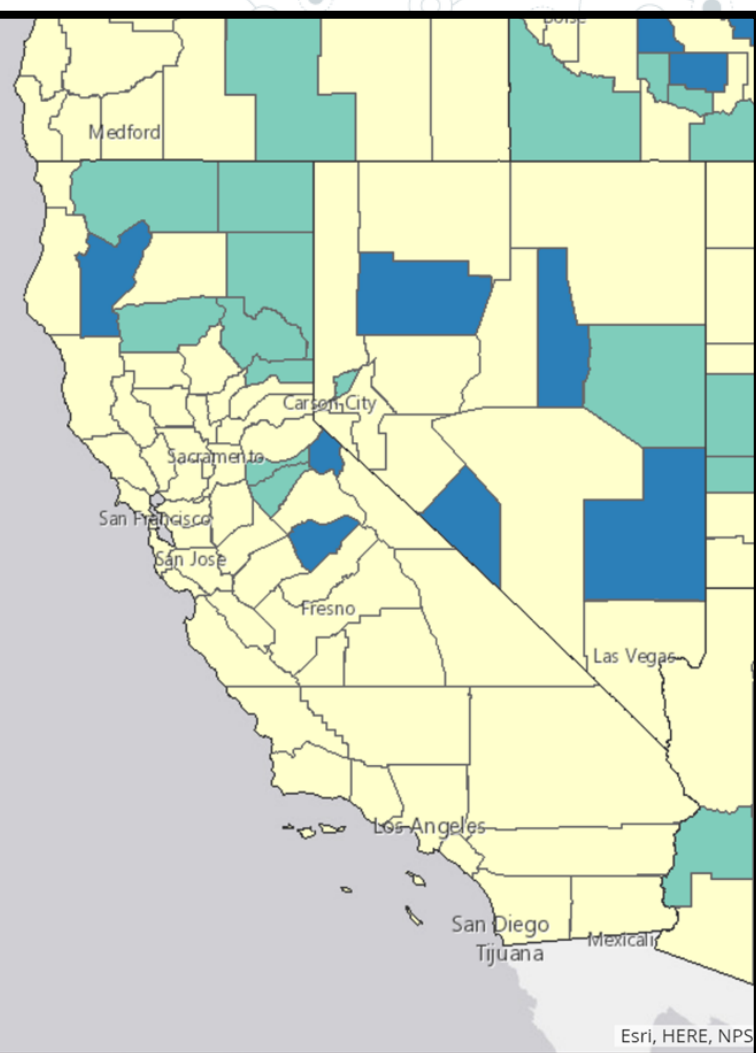*Click a category below to view the counties in the grouping.*

Completely Rural   Mostly Rural   Mostly Urban

Percentage of rural population by county for 2010

- 100% Rural
- 50% to 99.9% Rural
- Less than 50% Rural

Click here *to see the top five most and least populous counties by rurality level.*

Major Concepts

Digital Divide

Digital Equity

Digital Exclusion

Internet Computing Technologies

Project Goal: Our hope is that this toolkit will serve as a guide for public libraries to help bridge the digital divide for rural communities in California.

Activity:
Digital Divide Issue Isn't As Simple as It Appears to Be...

Lack of Internet

What other issues can you think of?
Please share in the chat box!

?

Digital Divide Issues

Lack of Internet

Additional Issues Below the Surface:

- **Broadband speed**
- **Technology Skills and Abilities**
- **Socioeconomics**
- **Public Library Access**
- **Language Skills**
- **Comfort in Using Computers**
- **Motivational Skills**

Building Community Partnership (Template)

HAVE A PLAN OF ACTION
- ☐ What are the goals for your organization?
- ☐ What resources do you need to obtain these goals?

IDENTIFY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
- ☐ What organizations have similar interests
- ☐ Which organizations have best suited to help your organization succeed?
- ☐ How will these organizations benefit from the partnership?

DESIGNATE A SPOKESPERSON FROM YOUR ORGANIZATION TO COMMUNICATE WITH POTENTIAL PARTNERS
- ☐ Prepare to before the pitch meeting
- ☐ Know important facts about your potential partner

CREATE A CONTACT LIST FOR EACH POTENTIAL PARTNER
- ☐ Leaders
- ☐ Decision-makers
- ☐ Presidents/CEOs

DEFINE THE COMMON GOALS BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY PARTNER AND YOUR ORGANIZATION
- ☐ What is the collaborative plan of action?

SHARE DECISION-MAKING
- ☐ Communicate frequently
- ☐ Be transparent with your potential partner

FOLLOW THROUGH ON COMMITMENTS
SHARE THE CREDIT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY PARTNER

Community Partnerships

- Public Libraries
- School Districts
- Community/Recreation Centers
- Computer and technology privately-owned businesses
- City Council

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Contacting Your Officials

Contact your elected officials

01 Organize a local advocacy group or partner with a community organization.

02 Identify your city/county/state elected officials.

03 Attend town hall meetings with your advocacy group or community partner.

04 Visit your elected official's office.

05 Organize phone calls. Make sure all group members address the same issue or ask similar questions.

06 Go public. Share your results on social media or other media outlets.

07 Follow-up with your elected official. Thank them for their time and effort.

*For more resources on engaging with stakeholders, check out the ALA Public Policy and Advocacy page or your state library association's page such as California Library Association

2.

Goals, Objectives and a Timeline

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Provide service to patrons who cannot access computers/Internet services
- Provide a space where others can access resources
- Provide a starting point for other libraries, schools, and departments

Objectives - How to Determine Your Own Objectives

SWOT Analysis

SMART Goals

Timeline

- Create a survey for your community
- Get Census information
- Look for gap areas
- Look at the infrastructure
- Look for federal/state money
- Create a plan to implement broadband
- Create programs to reduce bill amount

3.

Case Studies and Our Asks

Case Studies

BEST PRACTICES FOR TECHNOLOGY SERVICES ON DIGITAL EQUITY

ACHIEVING DIGITAL EQUITY CAN COME FROM THESE LIBRARY SERVICES!

01
Expand the reach of WiFi to reach outside the perimeter of the library

02
Offer bookmobile or mobile libraries to reach rural communities -

03
Purchase and lend out Internet hotspot devices and laptops to patrons

04
Establish a lending policy for lendable tech that identifies lost/damage fees, loan period, eligibility, and Terms & Conditions

05
Waive fines for technology loans if possible
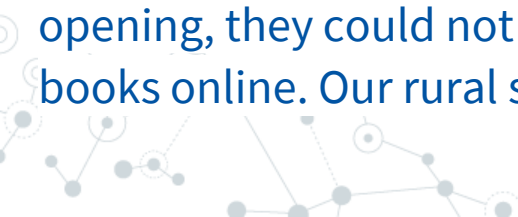
Case Study Example

Question 1: Since the pandemic happened, what did you do to support patrons who had limited technology access?

Librarian: Our library purchased 100 hotspots and have them loan a long term to families in the rural areas.

Question 2: What did NOT work well and what would you do differently?

Librarian: We offer curbside services and virtual storytimes during pandemic . However, patrons in rural areas heavily rely on library WiFi to get connected. Without library opening, they could not participate in the virtual storytimes, they are unable to request books online. Our rural staff has to call people for them to pick up their books.

Case Study Example

Question 3: How is your library marketing digital/technology services to your communities, particularly those who do not have access to the Internet?

Librarian: We market our digital resources - Overdrive, Libby, Flipster, virtual storytime, Zoom book discussion, gardening etc, through websites, social media, email blaster, posters outside the library facilities. For rural areas, staff also post flyers to the community center, post office, share with the local schools and the Friends of the Libraries.

Question 4: Any suggestions or resources for your library when looking at digital inequity?

Librarian: Need to get WiFi connection to rural areas. It is ridiculous that so many high tech companies in California while there is no Internet connection to so many rural areas.

Our Ask and Goals for this Toolkit:

- to have the toolkit supported by the California State Library by hosting it on the website and encourage sharing it with schools and other community groups
- to disseminate the toolkit over the CALIX listserv

Select References

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THANK YOU!

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Slide Deck: **Tinyurl.com/rurallibrariesCA**
Toolkit: **https://tinyurl.com/rurallibrariestoolkit**

Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

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