

DIGITAL EQUITY UPDATE:

The Fairfax County Digital Equity Action Plan

Information Technology Committee Meeting
June 4, 2024





Agenda

- 1 Background & Alignment to The One Fairfax Policy and The Countywide Strategic Plan
- 2 Process for Developing the Plan
- 3 Stakeholder Engagement & Rapid State Assessment Highlights
- 4 Overview of the Proposed Fairfax County Digital Equity Plan
- 5 Discussion / Q&A



Background



Defining Digital Equity

- Ensures opportunities for all Fairfax County residents to participate and engage in a connected community



The Proposed Fairfax County Digital Equity Action Plan

- Builds upon and improves existing efforts led by county departments as well as nonprofit organizations
- Provides a structure for a holistic approach with metrics focused on doing things more equitably and achieving equitable outcomes
- Demonstrates the county's ongoing committed to digital equity through alignment with **The One Fairfax Policy** and **Fairfax Countywide Strategic Plan**





The Fairfax County Digital Equity Action Plan Development Process

- Similar process used to develop digital equity and opportunity plans of the Commonwealth of Virginia and other jurisdictions across the Country
- The development process informs a Digital Equity Action Plan that positions Fairfax County as a [Digital Inclusion Trailblazer](#) – a county government that is paving the way and providing an excellent model for other communities



Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Mid-November 2023

- Engaged with **56 stakeholders** that represent Fairfax’s digital equity community

Rapid Current State

Mid-December 2023

- Synthesized information on broadband **infrastructure, affordability, and other data**
- Conducted **leading practices** research

Digital Equity Action Plan

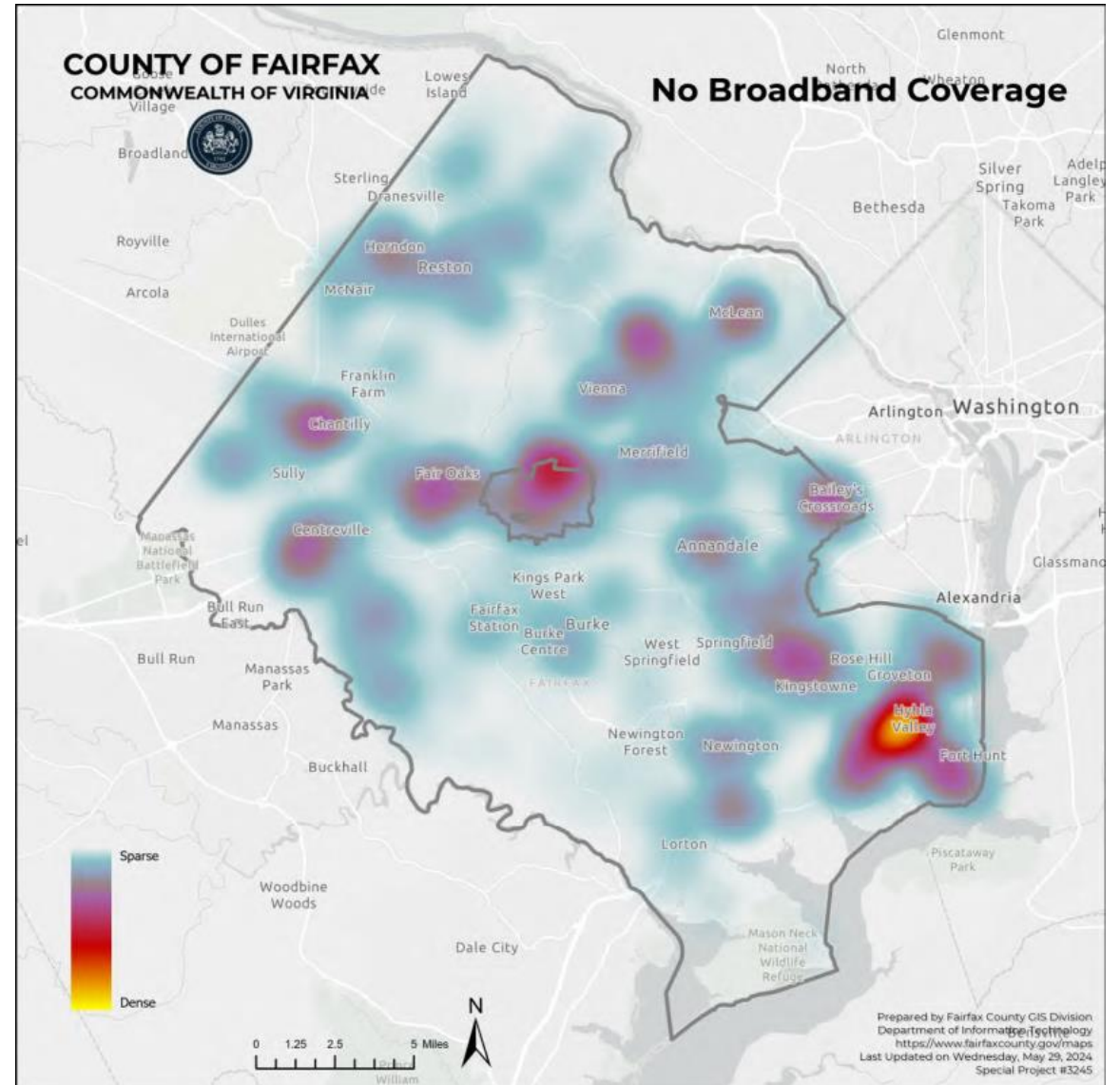
Late January 2024

- Developed an Action Plan that includes a **Strategic Framework** to organize Fairfax’s digital equity efforts.



Stakeholder Engagement & Rapid State Assessment Highlights

- Fairfax County has a strong broadband infrastructure, with nearly 98% with broadband coverage¹.
- The remaining 2% of households without broadband access are in areas with high vulnerability based on the Fairfax County Vulnerability Index.
- Nearly 6.8K (1.6%) of Fairfax County households lack a computer² and 14K (4%) of households lack broadband subscription¹
- Areas with a lower broadband subscription rates are also correlated with higher vulnerability scores
- Unified metrics and coordination are needed to support digital literacy and skill development
- Coordination is critical to achieve digital equity across a fragmented stakeholder ecosystem





The Proposed Fairfax County Digital Equity Action Plan

- A five-year roadmap to ensure that all Fairfax County residents have the resources and skills to participate and thrive in digitally-connected communities
- The plan proposes the following goals across five areas



Advancement

- Increase the County's ability to advocate for, coordinate, and sustain digital equity activities
- Strengthen the relationships between the organizations working in Fairfax County's digital equity ecosystem
- Monitor the progress against key outcomes and effectiveness of digital equity activities and calibrate initiatives to enable continuous improvement



Access

- Increase and improve all aspects of broadband infrastructure to the home, from coverage to wiring
- Increase availability of adequate, accessible, and free Wi-Fi throughout the county



Awareness

- Prioritize inclusion and representation to advance County-led digital equity activities
- Increase opportunities to engage in digital equity dialogue with residents across the County



Affordability

- Encourage enrollment in existing low cost or subsidized plans broadband subscription
- Expand and optimize device loan and giving programs



Adoption

- Determine and develop the skills residents need to fully engage online
- Partner with local employers to identify in-demand tech skills and launch a workforce development digital literacy pilot
- Work with partners to develop metrics to report progress.



Implementation & Next Steps

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Advancement

- Dedicate staff to oversee digital equity work
- Further enhance multi-language digital communications, digital emergency information assets, messaging, and processes
- Continue to engage the Virginia Office of Broadband to prepare for future funding opportunities
- Engage community partners in digital equity coordination efforts
- Share the [Digital Equity Action Plan](#)

Access

- Investigate opportunities to expand public Wi-Fi throughout the county
- Create speed test data collection engagement strategy with Internet Service Providers (ISPs)
- Coordinate with ISPs on areas without coverage

Affordability

- Continue a deep dive to understand specific barriers to affordability of broadband access and device ownership and usage
- Promote existing affordable [subscription plans to residents](#)
- Conduct an audit of existing device loan programs

Awareness

- Design a multi-language print and online marketing campaign for digital inclusion
- Identify county agencies, ISPs and nonprofit partners to co-host informational or community events
- Maintain Fairfax County's public-facing [digital equity website](#)

Adoption

- Explore partnership with businesses, higher education institutions, and community-based organizations to support the recruitment and training of individuals from underrepresented groups in high demand tech jobs



SAVE THE DATE
DIGITAL INCLUSION WEEK

October 7-13, 2024



Thank You

Questions?

