



American Samoa **BROADBAND***i***NEI** **DIGITAL** **EQUITY** **PLAN**

April 2024

American Samoa Government



The American Samoa BROADBANDiNEI Digital Equity Plan reflects priorities, strategies, collective needs, and opportunities identified through local coordination with regards to providing affordable, accessible, secure, and equitable internet-for-all. The concept of BROADBANDiNEI, information Network for Expansion and Inclusion, focuses on an island wide initiative aimed to encourage the immediate transition to all things digital equitably, thereby fostering a more efficient, productive, and resilient American Samoa. This includes an overarching framework for the application and implementation of broadband. At a territory level, this initiative is to be led by the Department of Commerce BCORD Office, working in collaboration with public, private sectors, and various community organizations to adopt BROADBANDiNEI.

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This document was compiled by SH3 Resource Development, LLC (SH3) in collaboration with the BCORD Working Group on behalf of the Territory of American Samoa.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Broadband touches all aspects of the community by providing a new foundation for innovations, economic development, healthcare, education, public safety, entertainment, and many other possibilities. The American Samoa BROADBANDiNEI Digital Equity Plan (DEq Plan) reflects discussions, community engagements, and collective input from various stakeholders, partners and community members. The document is a roadmap of strategies and actions to create an equitable environment for broadband use and adoption in American Samoa. It focuses on immediate actionable priorities and long-term opportunities in education, critical service, health, economic development, government services, cybersecurity, and policies and regulations – that will create an ecosystem that fosters digital innovation, improve technology literacy of all American Samoans, build digital economy, and develop industry clusters through broadband. Engagement activities, priority strategies and an implementation plan to achieve the goals and objectives of this plan are outlined in Section 2.3.

American Samoa recognizes that the deployment of broadband will only be achieved through parallel and combined approaches to provide affordable and accessible high speed broadband infrastructure, adequate access to devices and the digital literacy skills to meaningfully use the internet and its many services. The American Samoa BROADBANDiNEI Digital Equity (AS DEq Plan) was developed in parallel with the American Samoa BROADBANDiNEI BEAD 5-Year Action Plan.

The Digital Equity Act provides \$2.75 billion to establish three grant programs to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy. The first part of NTIA's execution of the Digital Equity Act is to fund digital equity planning efforts. The NTIA has yet to make American Samoa's full allocation. American Samoa will stand by to address critical issues of equity and

opportunity such as affordability, access to devices, training and skills, cybersecurity, safety and privacy, and the accessibility of government services as part of its overall approach to digital equity. There is also a significant amount of assessment to be done to create measurable objectives to advance digital equity and impact territorial economic development, education, health, civic engagement, and essential services.

Under this program, NTIA awarded American Samoa \$150,000 for Digital Equity Planning.

American Samoa's DEq Plan has the following key points:

- Affordable Connectivity for all residents of American Samoa
- Access to secure and accessible devices (assistive technologies)
- Upskilling local populations to participate and benefit from digital equity



UA O GATASI LE FUTIA MA
LE UMELE – WHILE THE
FISHERMAN SWINGS THE
ROD, THE OTHERS MUST
ASSIST HIM BY PADDLING
HARD.

- Samoan Proverb

2. INTRODUCTION

A single parent, Alofa Tunoa, working at the local cannery makes \$5.96 an hour at minimum wage. Alofa has two kids under 18 who attend public school. Her 40-hour work week yields a gross pay of \$476.80 and a net pay of \$348.06 after tax deductions every two weeks. On a monthly average, Alofa's take-home pay is \$696.12. Of that monthly income, Alofa spends approximately \$210.00 (30.17%) on food, \$140.98 (20.25%) on housing and utility needs, \$138.53 (19.9%) on cultural and church obligations, \$69.61 (10%) for savings (if any), and the remaining \$137 would be used for transportation needs (\$2 per one-way on bus per day = \$120 roundtrip each month), additional childcare needs and school needs (\$30-\$50), internet and phone costs (\$50 per month) and any additional emergencies (\$50-\$100) that may arise for the month. Her total monthly expenses is \$879.12, roughly \$200 over her monthly income.

Stories like Alofa's is the reality of almost 60% of the workforce in American Samoa who make between \$5.40 - \$6.69 an hour. Should she prioritize spending her remaining \$100 on broadband, which costs \$50+ per month and is most likely needed for her children's homework, staying connected to family and friends, primary means of communications, and accessing opportunities. Or should she prioritize transportation to work, childcare, school fees, and other emergencies? Is broadband a necessity?



American Samoa comprises five volcanic islands (Tutuila, Aunu'u, Ofu, Olosega, and Ta'u) and two atolls (Rose Atoll and Swains Island), covering 75 square miles in the South Pacific Ocean. An unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States of America (US) – American Samoa is the furthest US land to the east and south of the equator. Major economic activities in American Samoa include government services, tuna canning, and tourism. Government activities account for one-third of total employment, and tuna canning accounts for another one-third. The remaining one-third of employed workers are in the secondary economy, consisting mainly of retail and service enterprises. Agriculture has potential as a growth market; however, it is currently practiced mostly for home consumption.

American Samoa has a population of 49,710. 100% of American Samoans are considered members of covered populations due to rurality and remoteness. American Samoa recognizes the value of broadband and the importance of its integration in the community. Recognizing broadband as an established priority means improving opportunities, and expanding operations and services to adapt to the changing needs of the local community. However, many people cannot afford high-speed broadband internet service and lack the skills and devices to access the Internet.

This exacerbates existing social inequalities and prevents American Samoans from accessing essential service, social, educational, economic and healthcare opportunities.

At the heart of the American Samoa BROANDBANDiNEI Digital Equity Plan (DEq Plan) are elements of the **'aiga (family)**. The central component of **fa'asamoa** or the Samoan culture is the 'aiga. The definition of 'aiga includes one's wider family group, such as extended family, community, and village. Reflected all throughout the Samoan culture and tradition is the importance of maintaining close family, community, and village ties. Within our collective village as the Territory of American Samoa, giving and receiving **tautua (service)**, **fa'aaloalo (respect)**, and **alofa (love)** are crucial elements of our social structure and well-being.

The American Samoa DEq Plan is guided by tautua, fa'aaloalo and alofa for our 'aiga. It carries out our responsibility to create a more equitable community, so people like Alofa do not have to make the hard choices between broadband and other needs.

These elements are the foundation to building our global digital village and achieving the benefits of digital equity. Through digital literacy, program and technical infrastructure and opportunities to obtain the appropriate devices, accessible

applications, and support to acquire the digital skills, we can improve the quality of life of all residents of American Samoa.

American Samoa received funds to begin Digital Equity Planning in mid 2023.

The Territorial Broadband Coordination, Opportunities, Redevelopment and Deployment Office (BCORD Office) continued working in parallel with ongoing Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD) planning efforts headed by the Broadband Working Group and Steering Committee. Outreach efforts including weekly meetings, webinars, one-on-one meetings, presentations, briefings were hosted and attended by the BCORD Office. The American Samoa DEq Plan is designed to be a living document and the BCORD Office intends to continue outreach efforts across the territory to enhance and improve our local strategy for digital equity.

2.1 Vision

Ensure that all American Samoa residents have access to affordable, inclusive, accessible, and secure resources and opportunities to become an effective part of the digital global village.

The DEq Plan was developed in parallel with the American Samoa BRAOBDANDiNEI BEAD 5-Year Action Plan to guide and inform priorities for the BEAD and Digital Equity programs administered by National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) established under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

In this plan, the term “covered populations” is defined in Digital Equity Act Sec. 60302(8), and includes veterans, people who live in rural areas, people with disabilities, people with low literacy, English learners, and racial and ethnic minorities, among others.

2.2 Alignment with Existing Efforts to Improve Outcomes

To progress toward achieving digital equity in American Samoa, alignment of efforts by all stakeholders—public and private, including village and local government—to leverage all resources is critical. Ongoing local efforts to address digital equity are currently underway, and this is an attempt to consolidate and collectively plan and implement together. Aligning opportunities to improve digital equity in American Samoa with existing territorial plans and initiatives offers a chance to enhance current plans while fostering collaborative work with synergistic outcomes and leveraging existing expertise. Beyond this, alignment increases the impact of resources and programs.

The American Samoa BROADBANDiNEI Deq Plan reviewed several plans including: the 2021-2026 ASTBS; Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS); Workforce Innovations & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Plan; State Plan for the Library Services and Technology Act; BROADBANDiNEI 5-Year Action Plan; American Samoa Department of Education Educational Technology Plan; and the American Samoa Territorial Operations Plan. The Broadband Working Group drew from federal, territorial and publicly available data and information, subject matter experts and community leadership to develop priorities, strategies, collective needs, and opportunities concerning broadband for all residents of American Samoa, including covered populations. The working group also drew insights from experiences and lessons learned during COVID-19 to identify opportunities and resources necessary for better digital participation and achieving the benefits of digital equity.

The DEq Plan aligns with other territorial priorities to improve American Samoa's digital footprint in the areas of economic and workforce development, education, health, civic and social engagement, and the delivery of other essential services.

Economic and workforce development outcomes

At the heart of the American Samoa (AS) BROANDBANDiNEI Digital Equity Plan (DEq Plan) are elements of the 'aiga (family). The central component of fa'asamoa or the Samoan culture is the 'aiga. The definition of 'aiga includes one's wider family group, such as extended family, community, and village. Reflected all throughout the Samoan culture and tradition is the importance of maintaining close family, community, and village ties. Within our collective village as the Territory of American Samoa, giving and receiving tautua (service), fa'aaloalo (respect), and alofa (love) are crucial elements of our social structure and well-being.

The 2021-2026 ASTBS and the American Samoa CEDS plans promote the digital readiness of American Samoa's workforce to compete in the global market. To support the growth and diversification of American Samoa's digital economy, there needs to be opportunities for upskilling and training, as well as accessible and affordable broadband and devices for residents of American Samoa, including covered populations. Modern broadband and IT infrastructure are vital to stimulating economic growth and building American Samoa's digital economy. Digital Economy encompasses economic activities resulting from billions of online connections among people, businesses, devices, data, and processes. The backbone of such activities is the hyperconnectivity and interconnectedness driven by the Internet, broadband, technology, and Internet of things (IoT). With strategic planning, sufficient resources, and modernized broadband infrastructure, American Samoa can support a prosperous digital economy. These plans include the following priorities:

- Build a robust business environment and business ecosystem.
- Strengthen current industries and develop new industries.
- Strengthen secondary economic development support systems.
- Support and promote opportunities for broadband use to support and promote local, rural, veteran-owned, women-owned and minority owned businesses.
- Provide necessary tools for the local population to increase skills to support our local economy including affordable internet; access to safe and secure devices; and upskilling our workforce.
- Institute the BROANDBANDiNEI initiative across the Territory of American Samoa.
- Deliver training for the IT Professional Workforce.
- Create smart classrooms and campuses by providing broadband access campus-wide.
- Incentivize technology and broadband-driven investments.

Educational outcomes

The 2021-2026 ASTBS and the Educational Technology Plan share the recognition that broadband connectivity holds the unprecedented potential to bridge educational divides, transform learning, and improve skills for the globalized economy. Governments should make broadband accessible, empower teachers and students to use technology, support local language content production, and promote open educational resources. The plan acknowledges that participation in the global economy increasingly depends on skills in navigating the digital world. However, it warns that traditional school curriculums often prioritize the accumulation of knowledge over its practical application, failing to equip students with the ICT literacy skills they will need to ensure their employability in the knowledge economy. An excellent and well-rounded education is the basis on which future livelihoods and families are founded, opening up minds, and job prospects. The ability of broadband to improve and enhance teaching and students' academic experience is undisputed. The plans includes the following priorities:

- Developing and expanding Career Technical Education (CTE) curricula – Gainful Employment.
- Ensure all public and private school systems - Primary Education - have the necessary broadband, technology, equipment, and technical support in place to assist student learning.
- Implement the necessary public library services, technology, broadband, equipment, and technical capacity to support the educational needs of the people of American Samoa.
- Develop pathways to support the demand for digital literacy.

State Plan for the Library Services and Technology Act:

- Dedicated to meeting the informational, technological, and cultural literacy needs of all age groups by providing both current and historical reading and instructional materials in a variety of formats.
- Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a various formats (including new and emerging technology), across all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support their needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, financial literacy, and other types of literacy skills.

The territorial DEq Plan fully supports the American Samoa Department of Education Technology Plan and the State Plan for the Library Services and Technology Act in American Samoa, which focus on the educational technology needs, roles, strategies, action plans, and resource requirements for the use of educational technologies in American Samoa schools and the Public Library.

- Support the delivery of outreach and training to covered population about digital literacy
- Encourage and promote private sector efforts to increase access to devices and/or lower costs of devices through computer refurbishing, recycling and/or training
- Cultivate and promote efforts by the private sector and community-based organizations to provide digital literacy skills training and technical support to covered populations.

Health outcomes

The health infrastructure system in American Samoa consists of one hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson Tropical Medical Center (LBJTMC), and six community health centers operated by the Department of Health (DOH). American Samoa currently scores a 20 (lowest) and 26 (highest scored value) in the HRSA's Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), indicating an extreme shortage of primary, dental, or mental health care providers. Before Hawa'iki Cable installation, the LBJTMC and DOH had limited bandwidth capacity to conduct most telehealth services supporting primary care and specialty services. Today, with increased bandwidth in American Samoa, the LBJTMC Hospital and DOH can not only conduct live consultations with shared images and files but also expand to many other telehealth services like tele-ultrasounds, telepathology, teledentistry, and teleneurology. Below are identified priorities for telehealth in the 2021-2026 ASTBS:

- Implement more telehealth between providers and patients, including private healthcare providers.
- Establish the American Samoa Telehealth (AST) Taskforce
- Support LBJTMC Specialty Consultation (Provider-to-Provider).
- Enhance Community Integrated Behavioral, Social and Clinical Services to support telehealth counseling services for juveniles and at-risk youth.
- Identify and adopt a Telehealth Service Payment and Sustainability Model

The American Samoa DEq Plan acknowledges the value of expanding telehealth services to access and bring more health care and human service programs to American Samoa. With reliable and stable connectivity through Hawa'iki Cable, American Samoa can expand telehealth services-to continuously improve

access to care, increase availability of services both on- and off-island, gain access to healthcare professionals not locally available, reduce costs of services by minimizing unnecessary travel and referral costs, and provide online educational opportunities for healthcare professionals. With technical infrastructure currently in place, the next ideal steps are to identify needed services and the resources to support them.

One of the goals and key activities of the American Samoa DEq Plan is to ensure the availability of devices, so people can participate more actively in their healthcare through the use of telehealth. In addition, the DEq Plan supports the establishment of specialty services needed to improve health outcomes for covered populations. The DEq Plan's strategies support these goals for providing connected devices and Internet connections that enable residents to engage successfully in telehealth.

- Support the delivery of telehealth through training for healthcare.
- Support the use of telehealth through training for patient/receiving end.
- Support off-island referral, care coordination, continuity of care through telehealth.

Civic and Social Engagement outcomes

It has been a goal of the American Samoa Government to embrace telecommunications and ICT as a tool for delivering government services. Suitable e-government tools and applications play a crucial part in diminishing the digital divide and building American Samoa's e-Resilience. E-government is defined as using ICT to deliver government services more effectively and efficiently to citizens and businesses. It is the application of ICT in government operations, achieving public ends by digital means.

The 2021-2026 ASTBS identified the following government services priorities for action:

- Adopt the BroadbandiNEI Initiative.
- Conduct a government-wide IT Assessment.
- Develop and adopt an American Samoa Enterprise Architecture (EA) Framework for IT and communications.

The American Samoa DEq Plan calls for online government services to be inclusive, accessible, and secure for all covered populations.

Other Essential Services outcomes

The 2021-2026 ASTBS highlights the need to prioritize ICT for improving operations and transactions in American Samoa, especially in disaster communications. Communications during emergencies incorporate a wide range of measures to manage risks within communities and the environment. It encompasses the information disseminated by the government, responders, disaster managers, and other media. The ASTBS identified the following priorities relative to digital equity:

- Establish warm and hotlines for emergency technical support.
- Expand and adopt a Resilience Emergency Communications Network.

The American Samoa DEq Plan supports these goals through the strategies that address availability and affordability of devices and technical support, disaster response and community resilience including:

- Support the strengthening of inclusive disaster response capabilities and community resiliency through broadband.
- Support inclusive and accessible e-governance services to address the needs of covered populations in American Samoa.
- Support the design and delivery of accessible emergency communications.
- Support technical assistance and capacity building in emergency communications through broadband.
- American Samoa will reach these goals through the continued collaborative efforts from our partners and stakeholders

“O LE TELE O SULU E
MAUA AI FIGOTA – MY
STRENGTH DOES NOT
COME FROM ME ALONE
BUT FROM MANY.

-SAMOAN PROVERB

”

OUR COVERED POPULATION



Covered Households

Individuals who live in a household with an income below 150% of the poverty level



Individuals with Disabilities

Individuals with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits life activity



Aging Individuals

Individuals aged 60 years or older



Individuals with a Language Barrier

Individuals with a language barrier, including those who are English learners and have low levels of literacy



Incarcerated Individuals

Inmates confined in prison or jail, other than those in a Federal correctional facility



Rural Residents

Individuals residing in any town with less than 50,000 residents and not an urbanized area next to a town with 50,000 or more inhabitants



Veterans

Individuals who served and were honorably discharged from the US military



Racial or Ethnic Minorities

Individuals whose race or ethnicity is non-dominant within the US

2.3 Strategic Goals and Objectives

The American Samoa DEq Plan prioritizes the improvement and expansion of digital infrastructure serving covered populations while also improving affordability for our population as a whole.



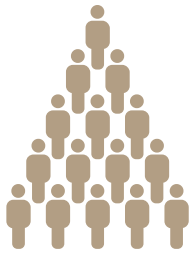
Goal 1: AFFORDABLE BROADBAND ACCESS - Improve the quality of life afforded through services and access to affordable broadband & internet service for covered populations.

American Samoa's unique geography requires a wide range of broadband infrastructure and technologies to support its digital growth.

Achieving digital equity in American Samoa is reliant upon having access and affordable broadband. We will strive to improve and expand digital infrastructure serving covered populations while also improving affordability and access for all residents of American Samoa.

Key Strategies

- Conduct outreach to covered population to provide details about affordability programs.
- Coordinate future initiatives addressing affordability to ensure that they are targeted to fill gaps in federal and local support and equitably improve access for covered populations.
- Coordinate territory-wide efforts to promote digital equity, including an updated household survey.
- Support and promote veteran, minority, and/or women-owned local businesses through the use of broadband.



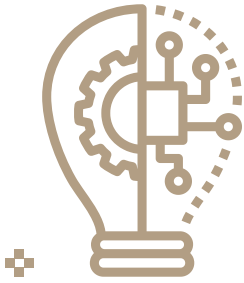
Goal 2: RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS - Develop an organizational, program and technical infrastructure that include governance, policies and regulations, collaborations and partnerships permitting American Samoa to become an effective part of the global digital village.

The American Samoa DEq Plan will initiate, develop, and advance broadband-related policies, programs and efforts that support and foster collaboration among sectors. Additionally, we aim to strengthen the implementation and revitalization of local, regional, national, and global partnerships for responsible governance and strong institutions in telecommunication.

The function of regulating telecommunication in American Samoa rests with the Governor of American Samoa. As Regulator, he has the authority to introduce new policies and regulations to meet the changes in our telecommunications environment. A key objective of developing a sound body for long-term territory-wide oversight is to ensure independence, transparency, and accountability of the regulatory process. In addition, policy development should be inclusive of input from all sectors and all covered populations. The AS DeQ Plan sees an immediate opportunity to re-examine American Samoa's territorial telecommunications regulatory framework and policies to determine feasible options that will align our strategic goals with the demands of the digital world.

Key Strategies

- Develop a body for long-term territory-wide oversight to promote broadband availability, reliability, affordability, and accessibility for covered populations.
- Ensure the plan is regularly evaluated and updated.
- Strengthen disaster response capabilities and community resiliency through broadband.
- Prioritize funding and investment in policies that advance digital equity.
- Integrate evaluation and data collection throughout implementation to measure progress and inform strategy development.



❖ **Goal 3: TECHNOLOGY LITERACY** - Promote technology literacy at all levels.

Technology literacy is defined as the ability of individuals to responsibly use appropriate technology tools to: access and integrate information; and construct and communicate knowledge to improve learning and support lifelong learning.

To fully take advantage of the opportunities that come with broadband, residents require devices. American Samoa will support, promote, and create opportunities to ensure that residents have access to affordable smart connected devices.

Key Strategies

Device Availability and Technical Support:

- Support the delivery of outreach and training to covered population about digital literacy.
- Encourage and promote private sector efforts to increase access to devices and/or lower costs of devices through computer refurbishing, recycling, and/or training.
- Develop and maintain technical support for residents to ensure that programs using online processes can be accessed and used broadly. Examples may include a hotline for technical support for devices; a live virtual support system; and a website frequently asked questions.

Digital Skills:

- Cultivate and promote efforts by the private sector and community-based organizations to provide digital skill training and technical support to covered populations.
- Establish a territory-wide framework for Digital Skills Attainment. For example, identify best practices and provide guidance on integrating digital skill development into K-12 and post-secondary education, workforce training, and other public training and programming.
- Support the establishment of IT/ICT Workforce Development Program for qualified IT/ICT staff or personnel
- Support the delivery of telehealth through training for healthcare providers; patients; to support on- and off-island referral, care coordination and continuity of care.



Goal 4: CYBERSECURITY - Enable American Samoa to securely participate in global, national, regional, and community information infrastructure.

Information, data and network security is a priority of the AS DEq Plan. American Samoa shall strengthen its cybersecurity to respond to growing global threats, and safely and securely protect its citizens from those attacks. In addition, new laws, policies, and regulations shall be implemented to protect consumers from potential cybersecurity crimes/attacks.

With regards to online accessibility and inclusivity, American Samoa will work to ensure that resources and activities delivered or accessed online are designed to be accessible for all covered populations.

Key Strategies

Accessibility and Inclusive of Public Resources and Services:

- Encourage the adoption of BROADBANDiNEI Initiative across the Territory to ensure information provided online meets current accessibility standards.
- Develop long-term mechanisms to continue improving accessibility and inclusivity as technology and unmet needs for covered populations change over time.
- Ensure that these programs using online processes for applications or to manage services are designed for maximum accessibility and also integrated as much as possible to simplify access to the public.

Cybersecurity

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) American Samoa reported over \$8 million (\$8,111,622) in financial losses in the last 3 years, with a total of 105 victims. The largest financial losses were made in the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020 with 7 million and 42 victims. Cybersecurity is more than a technical issue; it is also a cultural and behavior issue for American Samoans. The fa'asamoa, or Samoan way of life, trophies the collective community, reciprocity, inclusivity, and mutuality. This translates commonly to nearly blind trust regarding what is seen, sent, and received online. Cybersecurity is the practice of protecting information, data, systems, networks, and programs from digital attacks. This translates to isolation, exclusion, and alienation – all of which are culturally inept.

- Promote territorial policies that govern online privacy and cybersecurity in consideration of unique needs of covered populations.
- Ensure that online privacy and cybersecurity educational resources are available.
- Cultivate and promote efforts by private sector and community organizations to provide online privacy and cybersecurity training to covered populations.
- Support alignment of activities with the Territory of American Samoa Cybersecurity Plan.
- Support the development of IT/ICT Workforce Development Program for qualified IT/ICT staff or personnel in cybersecurity. For example, training for industry certifications; development of testing centers..

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**AFFORDABILITY...IS [STILL]
UNAFFORDABLE IN AMERICAN
SAMOA CONSIDERING THE
COSTS OF BROADBAND
INTERNET ON THE ISLAND.**

**-TAFAIMAMAO TUA-TUPUOLA,
PACIFIC CENTER IN HUMAN
SECURITY**

”

3. CURRENT STATE OF DIGITAL EQUITY: BARRIERS AND ASSETS



3.1 Asset Inventory

The American Samoa DEq Plan provides an inventory of existing resources, programs, and strategies that are available locally in American Samoa to address the needs and gaps in digital equity. This work was done in parallel with work done for the BEAD Plan. Digital equity and digital inclusion are interchangeable. In 2015, the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Utility Service (RUS) funded the Broadband Linking American Samoa Territory (BLAST) project, installing fiber-to-the-premise (FTTP) infrastructure connecting all homes and businesses to the local fiber-optic network. American Samoa invested over \$90 million in BLAST to replace its copper infrastructure with a fiber-optic network capable of delivering high speed, voice, video, data and cellular backhaul service throughout its islands of Tutuila, Aunu'u, Ofu, Ta'u, and Olosega. American Samoa further capitalized on BLAST upgrades by replacing the Territory's 2G network with 4G LTE (long-term evolution) technologies. The American Samoa Government (ASG) followed BLAST with a \$30M investment to launch the Hawaiki Submarine Cable (Hawaiki Cable) in 2018, connecting American Samoa to the global community via the availability of 200+ Gbps off-island bandwidth capacity. The Hawaiki Cable is a 15,000 kilometer (9320 miles) high-capacity underwater cable connecting Australia and New Zealand to the continental United States, American Samoa, and Hawaii. These investments enable an ecosystem for digital innovations to thrive, positioning American Samoa to achieve digital equity.

An array of public, private and community organizations are working towards digital equity. Many programs are independent of each other and the development of this plan is an opportunity to compile and combine efforts for digital equity.

- **Adult Education Literacy & Extended Learning (AELEL):** Enable every adult learner in American Samoa to acquire the necessary basic skills in math, reading, writing, speaking, and listening in order to compete successfully in today's workplace, strengthen their family foundation, and exercise full citizenship.
- **Bluesky Training for mobile devices:** Monthly user/device training provided by BlueSky for the elderly.
- **Career Academy with Coursera:** Access career training programs in Google IT support, Data Analytics, digital marketing, e-commerce, data engineering, cybersecurity, etc.
- **Computer Basic Learning Training:** The Department of Youth & Women Affairs (DYWA) offered a 3-month basic computer literacy training to help women improve their computer skills. The program was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice - STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program.
- **Empowering Pacific Island Communities:** Training & Skill Development in Best Practices, Counselor Certification, Professional Development, Access to Expertise in Treatment, Domestic Violence Response, Promote Integrated Care, Cross Agency Referrals, Case Management, Coordinated Community Response and Multi-Disciplinary Team approach
- **Feleti Barstow Public Library (FBPL):** Offers computer literacy programs for public and students during the summer months. Library includes assistive devices for blind (braille), magnifying glasses functions for books; e-books; access to variety media software programs. Challenges have been lack of public interest and reluctance to use digital services.
- **No Wrong Door:** Support state efforts to streamline access to long-term services and support (LTSS) options for older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- **Pacific Innovation and Technology Academy (PITA):** The Christopher James Foeoletini Ledoux Foundation established PITA, a free 3-year training program funded by the Administration for Native American (ANA), to support American Samoa's economic development by producing a workforce with technical skills and expertise that can contribute to emerging IT industries. From a broader perspective, PITA's 16-week program will give individuals the training, certifications, and experience they need to compete for entry-level IT positions.
- **Parents of Children with Special Needs Network (PCSN):** Parent-to-Parent Support Group for children, youth, and young adults with disabilities. Co-sponsored by the Parent Training and Information Center and Leadership in Disabilities of Achievement of Hawaii, we support one another in areas of health care, education, inclusion, community activities, guidance, and emotional encouragement.
- The **Pacific Center in Human Security (PCHS):** A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) launched to improve the quality of life for persons with developmental disabilities of all ages. This is supported through the UCEDD activities relating to quality assurance, education and early intervention, child care, health, employment, housing, transportation, recreation, community supports, assistive technology, and cultural integrity, and addressing the needs of persons with disabilities and their families.
- **Territorial Administration on Aging (TAOA):** Hosts a program that provides ipads to wheelchair bound seniors and/or caregivers.

3.1.1 Digital Inclusion Assets by Covered Population

Aging Individuals

BlueSky Device Training; No Wrong Door; Technology Training for Elderly (TAOA); PCHS distributed 85 iPads for computer training.

Racial and Ethnic Minorities

AELE; DYWA Computer Basic Learning Training

Rural Residents

AELE; DYWA Computer Basic Learning Training

Incarcerated Individuals

AELE; DYWA Computer Basic Learning Training

Veterans

AELE; DYWA Computer Basic Learning Training; Veterans project for food security and therapy.

Individuals with Disabilities

AELEL; Feleti Barstow Public Library computer literacy programs; PCSN; PCHS; Office of Protection and Advocacy for the Disabled; Office of Vocational Rehab; DOE Division of Special Education

Individual with Language Barrier

AELEL; DYWA Computer Basic Learning Training; PCHS

Assets Relevant to All Populations

AELE; EPIC; Career Academy with Coursera; DYWA Computer Basic Learning Training; Feleti Barstow Public Library computer literacy programs; Pacific Innovation and Technology Academy (PITA)

3.1.2 Existing Digital Equity Plans

American Samoa comprises five volcanic islands (Tutuila, Aunu'u, Ofu, Olosega, and Ta'u) and two atolls (Rose Atoll and Swains Island), covering 75 square miles in the South Pacific Ocean. An unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States of America (US) – American Samoa is the furthest US land to the east and south of the equator.

American Samoa is divided into five districts (or U.S. Census Bureau county equivalents): (1) Eastern District, (2) Western District, (3) Manu'a District, (4) Swains Island, and (5) Rose Atoll. Each district is made up of counties and villages. There are no village, county, district and/or tribal digital equity plans.

3.1.3 Existing Digital Equity Programs

See section 3.1.2 for Assets relevant to all populations.

- **Department of Education:** The Department of Education offers basic, intermediate, and advanced digital literacy courses for students, and has distributed over 10,000 laptops/computers to support student education. The American Samoa DOE also provides professional development opportunities for teachers in digital skills.
- **American Samoa Community College:** The American Samoa Community College offers basic, intermediate, and advanced digital literacy courses. ASCC also offers courses in Cybersecurity and Cyber Crime.

3.1.4 Broadband Adoption

According to the US census, 67% of American Samoa households have broadband in their homes. For the 33% of American Samoans who do not currently have broadband service at home, financial concerns - monthly cost of \$50+ and also the cost of devices - are large barriers to non-adoption. In addition, the functionality of devices and computers also make adoption less of a priority. American Samoa recognizes the need to educate, train, and provide opportunities to not only build skills but also inform the public about the value of broadband.

3.1.5 Broadband Affordability

- **Affordable Connectivity Program:** The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) benefit program to assist households in paying for internet service and devices. The program provides eligible households with a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a smart device (i.e., tablet, computer, or laptop) from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 towards the purchase price. The discounts are limited to one monthly service discount and one smart device discount per household.
- **Lifeline Program:** The Lifeline program is an FCC program meant to ensure the affordability of communication services for low-income subscribers. Lifeline provides subscribers with a monthly discount on internet service, telephone service, or bundled phone-internet packages purchased from participating providers. The discount provided is up to \$9.25 a month on service for eligible low-income subscribers and up to \$34.25 a month for eligible subscribers that reside on Tribal lands. Subscribers have a choice to apply their discount to either a wired or wireless service but cannot receive a discount on both services simultaneously. FCC rules disallow more than one Lifeline subscriber per household.

We, at the Department of Commerce, remain committed to supporting these types of projects, as they foster necessary economic development, create and retain job opportunities, and improve the quality of life in American Samoa. We believe that the development of this 5G network and similar initiatives are a critical step toward strengthening and diversifying our local economy. We are so humbled and pleased to play a role in making this a reality.

- Petti T. Matila, Director of Commerce



3.2 Needs Assessment

American Samoa is an “unincorporated” and “unorganized” territory of the United States with a population of about 49,710 people (2020 Census), located 2,300 miles southwest of Hawaii, over 4,100 miles southwest of San Francisco and 1,600 miles northeast of New Zealand. It is “unincorporated” because not all provisions of the U.S. Constitution apply and “unorganized” because Congress has not provided the territory with an organic act, which would organize the government, much like a constitution would.



American Samoa consists of seven (7) islands (Tutuila, Aunu’u, Ofu, Olosega Ta’u, Rose Atoll, and Swains Island) and is the only U.S. soil located south of the equator. American Samoa, being part of the most remote, rural and underserved non-contiguous area of America, faces many constraints in providing affordable, accessible high-

speed internet for many reasons, including our geographic location, current economic structure, market conditions, lack of natural resources, physical constraints, statistical and economic data, demographic information, cultural and political considerations and global trends.

As the population in American Samoa fluctuates, the need to access a

diversified economy continues on an upward trend. The 2020 American Samoa census count of 49,710 showed a drop from the 2010 count of 55,519 (a decline of 5,809 persons or an annual percent drop of -1.1%). The total population of American Samoa is relatively young with about 45% of the population being below 19 years of age. Of the 3,974 grandparents reported to have lived with their grandchildren, 63.6 % were responsible for caring for them.

American Samoa's most serious problem is the level of per capita income, which is only one-fifth (\$8,425) the U.S. average (\$61,738) and is actively decreasing. In 2020, about 54.6 % of all persons or 50.7 % of families were below the national poverty level. Moreover, greater than 90% of families below the poverty level have children under 18 years of age. The rise in global fuel costs affected all major Consumer Price Index groups, primarily Transportation, Housing, and Food. The rising cost of living through inflation triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war, reached another high of 9.7% in 2022.

The term "covered populations" is defined in Digital Equity Act Sec. 60302(8), and includes veterans, people who live in rural areas, people with disabilities, people with low literacy, English learners, and racial and ethnic minorities, among others.

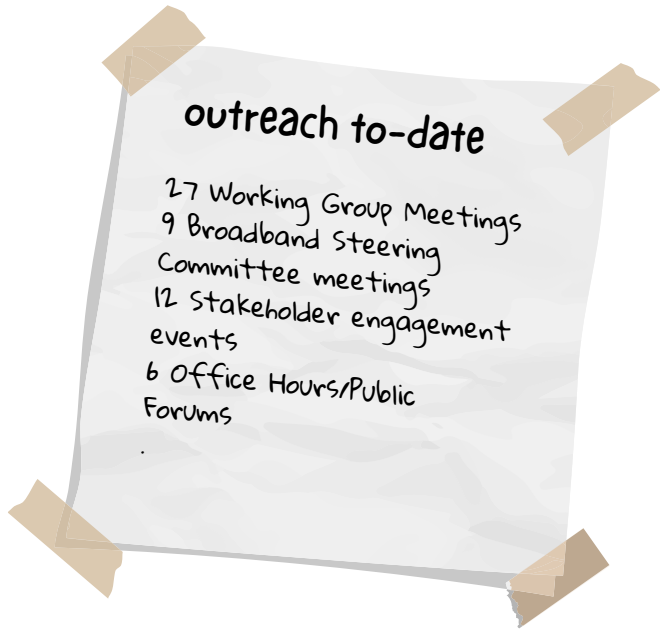
100% of American Samoans are considered members of covered populations due to rurality and remoteness.

It is vital that American Samoa develop a plan for digital equity that is inclusive of all populations. It is also vital that such a plan represents all of the public service organizations and interests involved in digital equity. Achieving digital equity requires an understanding of the barriers and challenges that covered populations endure to acquire full access to the benefits of broadband connectivity.

The reasons are clear:

- The use of broadband can help American Samoa to lessen the barriers of time and distance.
- American Samoa is located over 2,500 miles from Honolulu and over 5,000 miles from the West Coast of the Continental United States.
- There is a one-hour time difference between American Samoa and Honolulu, a 3 to 4 hour time difference from California, and a 6 to 7 hour time difference between American Samoa and Washington D.C.
- The cost of transportation is high and there are often only two flights weekly into and out of American Samoa from Honolulu.
- The financial condition of American Samoa requires public, private, and civic society to work together to optimize resources.

Engagement activities with stakeholders illustrate that all populations face complex barriers and challenges centered around the following core themes: (1) affordability of high-speed internet, (2) access to low-cost connected devices, (3) technical support for both internet and devices, and (4) digital literacy. Each of these themes requires unique intervention strategies and programs to ensure that they do not impede our ability to access broadband, devices, or use technology. The core themes extend beyond the needs of the covered population to include all residents of American Samoa.



3.2.1 Covered Population Needs Assessments

Individuals who live in covered households - There are 9,834 registered households in American Samoa with a median income of \$28,532 (Census 2020). Issues and barriers identified include:

- Access to connected accessible devices - There are limited options for devices on island and the cost is expensive. In the 2021 American Samoa Statistical Yearbook, 1,151 consumers invested in a smartphone compared to 1,049 cellular phones. Investment in technology such as desktops, iPads, Chromebooks, Kindle and Tablets totaled 2,494. These investments amount to 35% of the student population (13,372) in American Samoa.
- Samoans live in generation homes with shared access to devices, computers, and laptops.
- Convenience of mobile/portal connection or devices versus home subscription.
- Weather conditions or unrepaired cable/infrastructure disrupt connectivity.
- Digital equity will also support and deliver emergency communications through streaming and wireless platforms.
- Transportation needs to get to/from medical appointments and other obligations outweigh the need to purchase internet.

Aging individuals - American Samoa had a population of 49,710, with 25,254 males (50.8%) and 24,456 females (49.2%). 6.3% of the population are aged 65 or over and 0.3% ages 85 or over. This translates to over 3,000 people over the age of 65. For the purpose of this plan, aging individual is defined as individuals aged 60 or over.

- The Territorial Aging Office Administration (TAOA) oversees about 300 seniors. Most of their outreach and data collection is conducted through the hot meals program. TAOA reports that majority of their service population of seniors ages 65 or older:
 - Do not use the internet because they are not working. They occasionally use the internet for entertainment or not at all.
 - Lack access to devices at home;
 - Need to consistently practice and training on the use of specific devices such as mobile devices, ipads, laptops, TVs;
- Issues of language barrier, reliable Internet connection, affordable devices and digital skills were also shared by other organizations were most relevant and pertinent.
- The older adults in American Samoa have limited digital skills in reference to digital equity. Digital equity will encourage home subscription for older adults to access social engagement, telehealth service for family members, and telework so they can remain present as caregivers.
- According to the National Council on Aging, 27% of older adults live alone (2020). This contributes to feelings of isolation and lack of social and community value. There are limited opportunities to engage with others virtually due to lack of portable devices and connectivity to the facilities. Digital equity will virtually engage older adults with family members through virtual platforms, social media, and emails. Older adults are also aging caregivers to their spouses and/or family members with a disability because they cannot afford day care services.
- In addition, Elder Fraud and Abuse has become a greater concern especially in the digital space, as more scammers are targeting seniors who are primarily less technology literate. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations, IC3 Reports & IC3 Elder Fraud Reports, over the last three (3) years 16% of American Samoa victims were over 60 years old, with a loss of \$162,736.

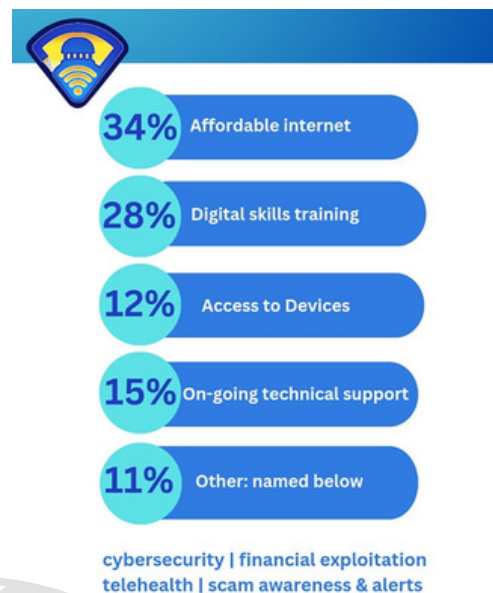
Incarcerated Individuals - The Tafuna Correctional Facility (TCF) is the only jail in American Samoa. In 2022, it was reported that TCF held an average of 292 inmates within its walls. 7% of the inmates were female with 93% being male. (American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2022). Empowering an incarcerated person through the existence of digital equity can enhance a successful reentry into society. Digital inclusion will respond to health, essential services, employment, education, and civic and social engagement.

- American Samoa is limited with attorneys. There are 89 registered members of the American Samoa BAR association. Less than 30 are actively living in the territory.
- The correctional facility currently has one computer with limited Internet access. There are daily virtual courts. During virtual court, inmates line up along the administrative office to use the computer, not only risking the safety of staff but there is also a lack of confidentiality, scheduling conflicts. There is also less opportunities for inmates to access the internet, conduct training and educational programs, and build career readiness skills.
- Currently, IT systems at TCF is standalone and does not interface with any other department within the judiciary system.
- Internet is not affordable for the department.

Veterans - American Samoa is home to ~4,000 veterans.

- Accessing healthcare service is one of the main barriers for veterans in American Samoa, who are serviced through the VA American Samoa Community Based-Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) with many off-island referrals to Hawai'i and other states. Mental health is the primary concern for many local veterans. Digital equity would mean delivering therapy sessions to assist and respond to Veterans from their home.
- Affordability of internet
- Stability of connectivity
- Accessibility to VA websites (closed network), telehealth appointments, online medical, or other government services for healthcare information.
- Need for training on devices.

- The VA Office currently does not have a website and communicates to veterans via phone calls and social media.
- Lack of data storage space both physical and digital;
- Lack accurate data collection



This data is only representative of the 74 entries collected in-person and via facebook and not a true reflection of the total American Samoa Veteran population.

Individuals with Disabilities - The disability and aging community ages 25 to 64, used the Internet to telework, job search, or for online training. The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy found 78.4% of people with disabilities and some type of home internet subscription. Minimal studies on the gap between digital divide may also affect employment outcomes for people with disabilities. For example, if accessible transportation is limited in rural communities, a person with a disability cannot access employment opportunities in the community. Broadband access from home will also fold space to employment opportunities, rural telehealth, communication to emergency information, and broadening educational studies. Digital equity will broaden and support the infrastructure of delivering accessible emergency communications through streaming and wireless platforms.

- Access to affordable accessible devices and other assistive technology
- Access to technical support for accessible devices and other assistive technology
- Lack of transportation options for people with physical disabilities
- Challenges with access to online services
- Deaf individuals speak Samoan. American Sign Language (ASL) does not translate directly into Samoan.
- Language barrier - Many resources and training only in English. Training and resources should be translated into Samoan.
- Lack of transportation and facilities in the outer islands to serve population with disabilities in Manua and Aunuu. While there are plans to build computers labs in remote village and outer islands, there were concerns about costs, accessibility, costs and the stability of connectivity.
- Many processes are still manually done and for forms that have been converted digitally, they are not accessible forms.
- Lack of equipment for home services
- For telehealth services offered through Special Education (SPED), timezone differences, lack of available specialists, miscommunication, poor internet connectivity and trust issues cause delay and cancellation of services for students in SPED. If teletherapy is included in a students Individual Education Plan, we need to develop the mechanism to ensure students have access to those teletherapy services.
- Equipment maintenance is also a critical concern due to salt spray and other environmental factors.

People with language barrier - There are 9,834 registered households in American Samoa (Census 2020) and 96.7% of the household population of 5 years and over spoke a language other than English.

- Ninety percent (90%) spoke Samoan. Samoan is the primary native language, which places the majority of students in a Limited English Proficient category. Distributing devices and MiFis will not fill the gap to

digital. What technical support is provided when navigating a learning management system in search of an assignment? School systems often budget for curriculum development, learning management systems, and devices to support educational technology in a K-12 system. Technical support is necessary to assist students and parents to have a positive experience and educational career in a digital era. Students cannot equally access the fundamentals of learning if digital guidance is not available. Digital divide will bridge access beyond a physical presence to include individuals who are English learners.

- Limited websites or online services translated in Samoan and other spoken languages.
- Limited technical support for devices.
- Many government programs operate only in English. Language access, including in public information campaigns, advertisements, and program enrollment processes, is a driving force in keeping residents from getting digitally connected.

Racial and ethnic minorities - Ninety-five percent (**95%**) of American Samoa's population consist of at least one ethnicity. Pacific Islanders consist of Samoan, Niuean, Tokelauan, Tongan, Fijian, and others make up at least 88.7% of the total population. The Asian race makes up 5.8% including Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Asian Indian, and other Asians.

- Low-income households and minorities were less likely to have home Internet connections. If they were connected at home, they were more likely to rely solely on mobile wireless.

Rural inhabitants - Critical services in rural and isolated communities such as American Samoa limits the economic security to thrive as the only U.S. Territory south of the equator. Rural healthcare with one hospital to serve six of seven islands requires more attention with limited access. One community college to build professional capacity is limited to serve on the main island of Tutuila. Delivering rural education on three of six populated islands is challenging with limitations to resources only available on island. The increase of reliable and affordable broadband will contribute to community resilience in outer islands. Digital equity can broaden telehealth services to address limited providers in rural areas. Healthcare physicians need training on telehealth delivery. American Samoa Community College and public libraries will recognize tablets and laptops as a learning resource for students to check out with a library card. Devices deployed across school and public libraries will contribute to students' academic achievement.

- Lack of connectivity diminishes the attractiveness of communities for residents and businesses
- Poor connectivity to Manu'a Island due to cut in submarine cable

3.2.2 Broadband Adoption

- Free public Wi-Fi/hotspot: Free public Wi-Fi/hotspot is a missing component to broadband adoption for all residents including covered populations. Conditions under ARPA funding require Internet service providers to provide free-public Wi-Fi. However, this has not yet been implemented.
- Cost of the Internet is a huge barrier. Like the story of Alofa, prioritizing broadband over other needs is a challenge. The median household income is \$28,352 and the average household size is five. Poverty level for families dropped to 50.7% compared to 54.6% of all persons.
- Technical Assistance and Maintenance
- Lack of Access to assistive technology
- Lack of ongoing support for devices and assistive technology makes it difficult for people to continue using the devices. Once the device has a technical problem or acts in a way that was not part of the class, many early learners struggle with how to troubleshoot or where to go next. This particularly impacts elderly and those with language barriers.

3.2.3 Broadband Affordability

- Post-ACP - Affordability of the cost of broadband after subsidies will be a huge barrier. Even when low-income individuals are able to obtain a device at little or no cost, it is still a challenge to afford monthly payments for cell service or Internet subscriptions. Service providers and individuals from covered populations alike assert that provision of a device itself is limited in value if it is not paired with a means to access the Internet or pay for monthly service.



4. COLLABORATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Prior to the launch of the BEAD and Digital Equity Programs, the BCORD Office, through its working group, Steering committee had already conducted extensive stakeholder engagement to inform broadband key strategies, objectives, policies and approaches. The BCORD Office, Broadband Core Working Group and Sub-groups established the Territorial Broadband Strategic Plan using surveys, direct outreach to stakeholders, and public comment periods, and is currently tracking progress for updates. In March 2023, Governor Lemanu Mauga established the Broadband Steering Committee, which includes key stakeholders representing various sectors and populations to further the work of the BCORD Office.



4.1 Coordination and Outreach Strategy

Building on this history, the BCORD continued to conduct extensive engagement as a central part of its process to develop the BROADBANDINEI BEAD Five-Year Action Plan, Initial Proposals Volume 1 and 2, and the American Samoa DEq Plan. Leveraging resources is critical to our approach since the Pacific Territories received only \$150,000 for digital equity planning as compared to other locations.

American Samoa has been intentional in crafting an equitable engagement and outreach process, which has been designed to engage all segments of our population. The BCORD incorporated a robust coordination and outreach strategy, where we gained insights from many perspectives throughout the Territory. Outreach with key stakeholders helped us reach residents who represented diverse populations, providing many valuable ideas about achieving the plan's objectives.

The BCORD Office is continuing its outreach through strategic engagements through several steps:

- Step 1: Review of existing information.
- Step 2: Conduct meetings and hosted public events.
- Step 3: Compile and analyze data collected.
- Step 4: Invite broad review and response to the draft plan.
- Step 5: Conduct Ongoing Outreach.



4.2 Collaboration

This comprehensive effort incorporates various forms of direct engagement with stakeholder organizations, including non-profits, local government officials, and broadband service providers, as well as extensive outreach efforts to the general public. Organizations involved as part of the development of the plan to date (ONGOING) include:

- American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Office
- American Samoa Community Cancer Coalition
- American Samoa Community College
- American Samoa Power Authority
- American Samoa Telecommunications Authority
- Bluesky Communication
- Congregational Christian Church of Am. Samoa
- American Samoa Government
 - Department of Commerce
 - Department of Corrections
 - Department of Education
 - Department of Health
 - Department of Homeland Security
 - Department of Human and Social Services
 - Department of Youth and Women's Affairs
 - Office of Disaster and Petroleum Management
 - Office of the Governor
 - Office of Protection & Advocacy for the Disabled
 - Territorial Administration on Aging
- LBJ Tropical Medical Center
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Pacific Center in Human Security (formerly known as University Center of Excellence for Development Disability)
- Christopher James Foeoletini Ledoux Foundation: Pacific Innovation Technology Academy
- Pacific Data Systems
- Fono (American Samoa Legislature)
- Talofa Eats
- Klaod Solutions
- Hope House
- Empowering Pacific Island Communities
- SH3 Resource Development, LLC
- VCX Technologies

4.3 Ongoing Engagements

Throughout the implementation of the BEAD and Digital Equity programs, the BCORD will continue to provide updates to interested stakeholder organizations. This will involve close engagement with subgrantees to work with them through the subgrantee application. There will be ongoing outreach and stakeholder meetings for the development of this plan.

Throughout the implementation phase, the BCORD will continue to provide updates to interested stakeholder organizations. This will naturally include extensive coordination and engagement with subgrantees to work with them through the subgrantee application and project (deployment) processes. It will also be particularly important to be aware of additional broadband infrastructure grant funding that is coming into the territory. The BCORD will also continue to coordinate with organizations doing any complementary outreach. This will include identifying additional related initiatives that commence during the plan implementation process. ACP outreach coordination meetings, Office Hours, Road Show Meetings, TalaTek will continue as appropriate, and additional groups will be added as more programs and initiatives arise.

The BCORD will pursue the following strategies to ensure informed and coordinated stakeholder engagement and collaboration:

- Public comment periods on draft plans: All drafts under the Internet for All Plans are released for public comment before finalizing.
- Ongoing convening of the Broadband Working Groups and Steering Committee: The BCORD will continue to convene these working groups to advise the BCORD throughout the implementation of the BEAD and Digital Equity Plans, maintain local coordination, and identify opportunities for further collaboration.
- Local government coordination: The BCORD will continue to maintain close contact and coordination with appropriate government agencies and village councils.
- Coordination with potential subgrantees: The BCORD will continue to maintain close contact and coordination with ISPs, CAIs and other potential subgrantees to ensure a transparent and fair competitive process for subgrantee selection and program deployment. The BCORD does this through hosting meetings with these entities both individually and as groups.

Information, discussions and data were compiled and analyzed to reflect a current environmental scan, market trends, and realities. The American Samoa BROADBANDiNEI Digital Equity Plan adopted the established vision and goals, and formulated specific objectives according to priorities and needs of the BEAD program. To best inform this plan, the BCORD and BSC took a holistic and inclusive community approach, and sought input from various stakeholders through:

Working Group Weekly Meeting: The BCORD held 20+ one-hour virtual sessions focused on vision and goals building, understanding ideologies, concepts and frameworks on broadband and its applicability in various markets and industries in American Samoa.

BEAD Office Hours: The BCORD hosts weekly office hours to address questions or concerns in relation to broadband and BEAD/DE Programs.

Broadband Steering Committee Meetings: The Office of the Governor and the BCORD office has convened the BSC to gather input and guidance on specific priorities, actions and recommendations for broadband use and adoption.

TalaTek: Talanoaga Fa'aTekonolosi (TALATEK) is a webinar series / public forum of pertinent topics on the use of broadband and technology applications in American Samoa. TALA-TEK features speakers and experts at the local and community, national, and global levels. Topics include but are not limited to: cybersecurity, telehealth, distance education, eCommerce, trades and technologies and many more. The BCORD office has hosted public / virtual forums on Cybersecurity, Telehealth, Digital Economy and BEAD/DE.

Household Survey: The BCORD anticipates a post-COVID broadband household survey to gather information to understand the landscape, opportunities, challenges, usage, quality, affordability, access to broadband in American Samoa. The Household Survey will be conducted in both English and Samoan.

Road Show Meetings: Road Show Meetings are one-on-one meetings with eligible entities, community members, and stakeholders to gather.

The Digital Equity Plan will be a living document. As we move forward with implementing strategies and actions, we will continue to grow and refresh this body of research by regularly reaching out to the covered populations whose voices informed the initial plan. Ongoing outreach will entail revisiting the approaches that elicited the rich feedback:

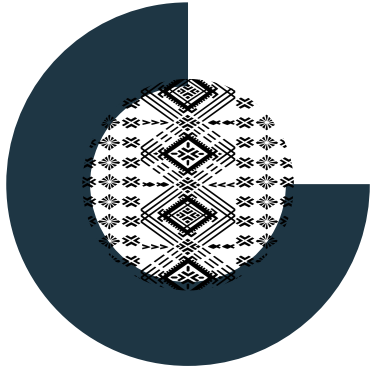
- Regular Office Hours
- Digital Equity Summit
- Ongoing feedback from community organizers
- Surveys, trackers and other tools

4.4 Public Comments

The BCORD coordinated a 30-day public comment period upon completion of a full draft American Samoa Digital Equity Plan. Through social media and traditional outreach methods, the BCORD received public comments. The Digital Equity Plan will continue to be a living document. Public comments were incorporated into the plan in appropriate sections. A summary of public comments is included in the Appendices.



5. IMPLEMENTATION



Digital equity in American Samoa will involve multiple initiatives and efforts associated with each strategy and objective. The BCORD Office looks forward in particular to the opportunity to use its Digital Equity Capacity Grant to support and develop further digital equity capacity in partnership with the many local entities that have participated in BCORD’s community engagement work over the past year. At the same time, the BCORD notes that the ability to develop and sustain these initiatives is dependent on the availability of resources and the many other priorities policymakers have for those resources. For that reason, these potential initiatives are offered as examples of what may be possible if resources are available.

Consistent with longtime efforts to expand broadband and address gaps in the digital divide, American Samoa has designed measurable, actionable and sustainable strategies as detailed above. The BCORD Office will work with both public and private sectors and communities on implementation strategies to address local needs. These strategies are in line with the limited resources and funding available to American Samoa for implementation. To address the potential that resources may not be available to support the full range of proposed initiatives, American Samoa plans to leverage existing resources, partnerships, and creative approaches. By utilizing grassroots efforts, public-private collaborations, and maximizing available resources, American Samoa plans to improve digital equity in a prudent way that recognizes that resources are not unlimited.

5.1 Implementation Strategy & Key Activities

American Samoa does not have any labor organizations or unions. Regular engagement with human resources departments and community-based organizations will be a cornerstone of our strategy, allowing us to maintain worker voice throughout the planning and implementation process. The BCORD Office will engage in initiatives and activities that maintain and create jobs for qualified individuals including but not limited to:

- Collaborations to create jobs that meet the basic needs and offer conditions that promote equity, inclusiveness, and opportunities for career advance;
- Highlighting the significance of broadband and technology career opportunities in the American Samoa Comprehensive Economic Strategies currently under development;
- Coordinate the development of local laws that promote creating of jobs in broadband and telecommunications.

American Samoa has limited resources available concerning local laws, of which many are outdated. Presently there are no laws concerning technology, broadband and telecommunications that would be relevant for the purposes of this section. The authority of the telecommunications regulator is vested in the Governor through executive order. The BCORD Office requires compliance with all federal and territorial laws. Concerning territorial laws in regard to labor, they may be found under Title 32 of the American Samoa Code Annotated (asbar.org). Laws concerning environmental and historic preservation can be found in Title 26 of the American Samoa Code Annotated (asbar.org).

American Samoa's implementation goals build on the existing activities taking place in schools, businesses, library, college, and nonprofit organizations across the Territory. By building upon existing assets and evaluating and learning from best practices, we will amplify the impact of the funding and increase sustainability in the future. At present, the BCORD plans to use most of its Digital Equity Act funding to set up a grant program to support Covered Populations prioritizing organizations that have been operational within American Samoa for at least three years with a demonstrated record of impact in advancing digital access. We believe that a grant program is the best way to address the gaps in existing local and private efforts to reduce the barriers for Covered Populations that are outlined in Section 3.2 and make progress against the measurable objectives for each Covered Population outlined in Section 2.3.

A competitive grant program will allow the BCORD to distribute funds directly to those regularly engaged with the Covered Populations, who are intimately familiar with their barriers to digital access, and have creative solutions to close existing digital access gaps. Grants will be directed to supporting at least one of these four goals:

1. **AFFORDABLE BROADBAND ACCESS** - Improve the quality of life afforded through services and access to affordable broadband & internet service for covered populations.
2. **RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS** - Develop an organizational, program and technical infrastructure that include governance, policies and regulations, collaborations and partnerships permitting American Samoa to become an effective part of the global digital village.
3. **TECHNOLOGY LITERACY** - Promote technology literacy at all levels.
4. **CYBERSECURITY** - Enable American Samoa to securely participate in global, national, regional and community information infrastructure.

GOAL 1: AFFORDABLE BROADBAND ACCESS - IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AFFORDED THROUGH SERVICES AND ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE BROADBAND & INTERNET SERVICE FOR COVERED POPULATIONS

Objective/Strategy	Potential KPI	Baseline	Near-Term	Long - Term	Data Collection
1.1 Conduct outreach to all residents of American Samoa to provide details about broadband affordability programs	% of American Samoa (all rural) residents enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program and or other broadband assistance programs.	17%	Increase by 10%	40%	BCORD
1.2 Coordinate future initiatives addressing affordability to ensure that they are targeted to fill gaps in federal and local support and equitably improve access for covered populations	% of American Samoa (all rural) residents with access to broadband at their home	0% *	50%	75%	BCORD and other relevant agencies
1.3 Coordinate territory-wide data collection efforts to promote digital equity for all American Samoa (all rural) residents including an updated household survey	# of outreach events to all American Samoa residents (all rural)	<10%	Increase by 10%	40%	BCORD, Subgrantees
1.4 Support and promote veteran, minority and/or women-owned local businesses through the use of broadband	# of veteran, minority and/or women-owned local businesses using broadband	Veteran: 0%*	30%	40%	BCORD, Subgrantees

* Baseline data will be determined with the Capacity Grant funding.

Alignment with Territorial Goals and Outcomes:

These goals and indicators support the territorial Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and the 2021-2026 ASTBS addressing:

- Economic Outcomes: Build a robust business environment and business ecosystem; Strengthen current industries and develop new industries; Strengthen secondary economic development support systems; Support and promote opportunities to use broadband to support and promote local, rural, veteran-owned, women-owned and minority owned businesses. P.5.7 Incentivize technology and broadband driven investments; P.5.10 Launch eCommerce Island wide Initiative.
- Education Outcomes: Provide necessary tools for the local population to increase skills to support our local economy including affordable internet, access to safe and secure devices, and upskilling our workforce; Deliver training for IT Professional Workforce; Create smart classrooms and campuses by providing broadband access campus wide.
- Civic and social outcomes: Institute the BROADBANDiNEI initiative across the Territory of American Samoa; Incentivize technology and broadband driven investments.

Barriers and Gaps

Goal 1 can only be achieved through access to multiple funding resources including BEAD, Capital Projects Fund, Digital Equity Act as well as local contributions. All of American Samoa is considered rural, which includes many older and lower-income citizens; who cannot take advantage of the benefits broadband adoption and digital skills confer.

Potential Activities

- Partner with Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) to encourage participation in broadband assistance programs.
- Partner with CAIs to broaden access to high-speed Internet for residents in all covered populations.
- Conduct an updated broadband household survey.
- Partner with CAIs and/or organizations to collect data on digital equity and ensure data collection is done with the understanding of how to engage and receive input from covered populations to ensure the lived-experiences and voices of community members.

- Support new or existing resource hubs with computer devices, Wi-Fi, charging stations, and technical support staff in remote communities.
- Enlist the support of organizations to build awareness and disseminate information about digital equity.
- Publicize the availability of digital equity programs and resources that are provided on each island for each covered population.
- Partner with employers including veteran, minority and/or women-owned local businesses to develop digital literacy programs for their employees.
- Track and maintain public-facing information on existing local, state and federal assistance-based initiatives including the Affordable Connectivity Program and Lifeline. This information will include eligibility requirements, how to apply, and participation rates across covered populations.

Potential Partners

Achievement of these goals will continue to be a collaboration between key partners, such as the American Samoa Community College, Pacific Center in Human Security, various American Samoa Government agencies, Feleti Barstow Public Library, and nonprofit community organizations, to assess the baseline, currently set at zero, and track progress over time toward meeting objectives in increasing American Samoa's digital equity understanding. Data sharing agreements must be implemented between partner agencies both within government and nonprofit organizations.



GOAL 2: RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS - DEVELOP AN ORGANIZATIONAL, PROGRAM AND TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE THAT INCLUDE GOVERNANCE, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS, COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS PERMITTING AMERICAN SAMOA TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE PART OF THE GLOBAL DIGITAL VILLAGE.

Objective/Strategy	Potential KPI	Base line	Near-Term	Long-Term	Data Collection
2.1 Develop a body for long-term territory-wide oversight to promote broadband availability, reliability, affordability and accessibility for all American Samoa residents	Evaluate up to 3 options for long-term public oversight to promote broadband availability, reliability, affordability and accessibility for all American Samoa residents	0%*	Identify 1 option for public oversight	Implement appropriate option to address digital equity	GO, BCORD
2.2 Ensure the plan is regularly evaluated and updated	1-5 DEq Plan reviews	0	1-5 Plan review	Review DEq Pln 1-5 times in next 5 year	BSC, BCORD
2.3 Strengthen disaster response capabilities and community resiliency through broadband for all American Samoa residents.	# of training with information regarding emergency management and broadband attended	0*	to be developed	to be developed	Subgrantees, BSC, GO, BCORD
2.4 Prioritize funding and investment in policies that advance digital equity for all American Samoa residents	# of workshops provided.	0	1-2 workshop per year	5 workshops in the next 5 years	BCORD
2.5 Identify shared tools for grantees to track outputs and facilitate data analysis to inform future improvements for American Samoa residents.	% of grantee who track outputs on data collection platforms	0	to be developed	to be developed	Subgrantees

* Baseline data will be determined with the Capacity Grant funding.

Alignment with Territorial Goals and Outcomes:

These goals and indicators support the goals and objectives of the 2021-2026 ASTBS addressing:

- Civic and social outcomes: Institute the BROADBANDiNEI initiative across the Territory of American Samoa; Develop and Adopt an American Samoa Enterprise Architecture (EA) Framework for IT and Communications

Barriers and Gaps

Goal 2 presents an opportunity for American Samoa to develop legislation, policies and regulation to govern various aspects of broadband adoption and digital equity. This has been a long standing gap area as there are currently no local laws governing telecommunications implementation and deployment.

Potential Activities

- Support the establishment of a Digital Equity Advisory Panel
- Support the research of 3 options for long-term public oversight to promote broadband availability, reliability, affordability and accessibility for covered population
- Partner with organization to research and develop broadband and digital equity legislation for American Samoa
- Create grant technical assistance program for community organizations.
- Support annual review and plan evaluation activities and outreach
- Support the convening of agencies and community leaders from recent disasters in American Samoa to identify and recommend best practices for improving resiliency for covered populations.
- Participate in training on emergency response planning and deployment of resources following disaster events.
- Provide regular digital equity information to emergency management agencies before, during, and after a disaster event
- Publicize the availability of digital equity programs and resources that are provided on each island for each covered population.
- Coordinate and collaborate with establishments such as Community Anchor Institutions, resilience hubs, mobile health clinics that provide key digital equity resources for vulnerable communities.
- Participate in the planning efforts of community-based disaster preparedness and readiness groups.

Potential Partners

Key partners include but not limited to the American Samoa Department of Homeland Security; Weather Service Office; Federal Emergency Management Agency; Community Anchor Institutions; Internet service providers; Office of Samoan Affairs; Village Councils; Public; and related non-profit organizations for example, Legal Aid. Together, we will assess the baseline of digital resilience training activities in the state and track progress of measurable objectives over time as programs supporting community resilience roll out. Data sharing agreements must be implemented between partner agencies both within government and nonprofit organizations.



GOAL 3: TECHNOLOGY LITERACY - PROMOTE TECHNOLOGY LITERACY TO ENSURE THAT ALL RESIDENTS OF AMERICAN SAMOA CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES AVAIL THROUGH BROADBAND

Objective/Strategy	Potential KPI	Base line	Near-Term	Long-Term	Data Collection
3.1 Device Availability and Technical Support					
3.1.1 Support the delivery of outreach and training to covered population about digital literacy	# outreach and training to elderly, veteran, individuals with disabilities, low-income household, individuals with language barriers, ethnic minorities, rural households and incarcerated population about digital literacy	0%*	Annual	2	BCORD, Subgrantees
3.1.2 Encourage and promote private sector efforts to increase access to devices and/or lower costs of devices through computer refurbishing, recycling and/or training	% of covered populations without a computer, smartphone or tablet, low-income household all rural incarcerated individuals with disabilities	0%*	30%	40%	BCORD will conduct an updated household survey
3.1.3 Develop and maintain technical support for American Samoa residents to ensure that programs using online processes can be accessed and used broadly.	# of technical support activities for rural American Samoa residents, elderly and veterans implemented such as but not limited to: digital literacy training; a hotline for technical support for devices; a live virtual support system; a website frequently asked questions, etc...	0%*	to be developed	to be developed	BCORD, Subgrantees

* Baseline data will be determined with the Capacity Grant funding.

GOAL 3: TECHNOLOGY LITERACY - PROMOTE TECHNOLOGY LITERACY TO ENSURE THAT ALL RESIDENTS OF AMERICAN SAMOA CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES AVAIL THROUGH BROADBAND

Objective/Strategy	Potential KPI	Base line	Near-Term	Long-Term	Data Collection
3.2 Digital Skills					
3.1.1 Cultivate and promote efforts by the private sector and community-based organizations to provide digital skill training and technical support to covered populations.	# of individual completing a digital skills training or program: elderly, veteran, individuals with disabilities, low-income household, individuals with language barriers, ethnic minorities, rural households and incarcerated population	0%*	by 10%	+ by 25%	Subgrantees
	# of programs providing training on developing digital skills for covered populations	0%*	10%%	+ by 25%	Subgrantees
3.2.2 Support the delivery of telehealth through training for healthcare providers; patient; to support on- and off-island referral, care coordination and continuity of care.	# of telehealth training for healthcare providers; patient; to support on and off-island referral, care coordination and continuity of care for veterans, people with disabilities and all rural inhabitants.	0%*	+ by 5%	+ by 25%	Subgrantees
3.2.3 IT/ICT Workforce Development Program for qualified IT/ICT staff or personnel	# of industry qualified IT/ICT staff, all rural inhabitants	0%*	up by 5%	up by 25%	Subgrantees

* Baseline data will be determined with the Capacity Grant funding.

Alignment with Territorial Goals and Outcomes:

These goals and indicators support territorial goals and objectives stated in plans including but not limited to the American Samoa State Plan for the Library Services and Technology Act, Comprehensive territorial economic strategic plan; the American Samoa Department of Education Technology Plan; the WIOA Plan; 2021-2026 ASTBS addressing:

- **Economic Outcomes:** Build a robust business environment and business ecosystem; Strengthen current industries and develop new industries; Strengthen secondary economic development support systems;; Support and promote opportunities to use broadband to support and promote local, rural, veteran-owned, women-owned and minority owned businesses. P.5.7 Incentivize technology and broadband driven investments; P.5.10 Launch eCommerce Island wide Initiative
- **Civic and social outcomes:** Institute the BROADBANDiNEI initiative across the Territory of American Samoa; Incentivize technology and broadband driven investments
- **Education Outcomes:** Provide necessary tools for the local population to increase skills to support our local economy including affordable internet, access to safe and secure devices, and upskilling our workforce; Deliver training for IT Professional Workforce; Create smart classrooms and campuses by providing broadband access campus wide; Promoting a system of workforce development that responds to the lifelong learning needs of the Territory's workforce; Dedicated to meeting the informational, technological, and cultural literacy needs of all age groups by providing both current and historical reading and instructional materials in a variety of formats; Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support their needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills.

- **Health Outcomes:** One of the goals and key activities of the American Samoa DEq Plan calls for the availability of devices so people may be able to participate more in their health care through the use of telehealth. In addition, it provides specialty services needed to improve health outcomes for covered populations. The DEq Plan strategies support these goals for providing connected devices and Internet connections that enable residents to successfully engage in telehealth. Support the delivery of telehealth through training for healthcare; Support the use of telehealth through training for patient/receiving end; and Support off-island referral, care coordination, continuity of care through telehealth

Barriers and Gaps

Goal 3 aims to build a digitally literate American Samoa by making suitable technology available and building the skills of our people. Training programs, support systems, and devices must be tailored, usable and secured. Nearly 33% of America's workers lack digital skills . These skills span a wide array of complexity, from creating an email account for the first time to writing a first line of code. In addition, new government and health programs are growing their online service options, creating a new need for training to utilize these services. There is a continued need for expansion of digital skill needs in American Samoa and more broadly. Digital Equity funding will be essential to ensuring digital literacy among new technology and internet users, and to bolstering current programs.



Potential Activities

- Designate funding for digital equity programs for covered populations.
- Designate funding for computer refurbishing, recycling and/or training programs.
- Identify local organizations or programs who can provide technical support for devices.
- Designate funding to support technical assistance programs.
- Where possible, assist with establishing computer rooms to support community use and digital literacy classes.
- Provide funding to offer opportunities for technical support programs.
- Promote opportunities for digital skills development classes, training and other activities to be done through outreach to covered population.
- Support programs and curricula that prepare students to serve their communities in digital navigator programs, digital literacy training, and community-based digital hubs.
- Provide funding to offer opportunities for technical support programs.
- Support telehealth service providers and programs that expand access to telehealth services.
- Build capacity within existing service providers for covered populations to provide digital literacy training at no cost or at highly affordable rates for their clients.
- Increase opportunities for advanced skill training as part of workforce upskilling or reskilling, primarily through the community college system and in response to employer needs.
- Partner with companies to supply centers that provide necessities for devices such as replacement parts, accessories, and chargers.
- Design communication channels to meet the unique needs of covered populations such as translating websites, documents, flyers, instructional materials, etc. into multiple languages.
- Partner with public and private entities who serve covered populations to support device refurbishment and distribution programs.

Potential Partners

Achievement of these goals will continue to be a collaboration between key partners such as the American Samoa Community College, Pacific Center in Human Security, various American Samoa Government agencies, Feleti Barstow Public Library, nonprofit community organizations, to assess the baseline, currently set at zero, and track progress over time toward meeting objectives in increasing American Samoa's digital equity understanding. Data sharing agreements are being worked on between partner agencies both within government and nonprofit organizations.

GOAL 4: CYBERSECURITY - ENABLE AMERICAN SAMOA TO SECURELY PARTICIPATE IN GLOBAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Objective/Strategy	Potential KPI	Base line	Near-Term	Long-Term	Data Collection
4.1 Accessible and Inclusive public resources and services					
4.1.1 Encourage the adoption of BROADBANDiNEI Initiative across the Territory to ensure information provided online meets current accessibility standards to people with disabilities.	# of agencies, programs and/or organizations participating in BROADBANDiNEI Initiative	<10 %	+ to 30%	+ to 40%	BCORD All
	# of ASG websites that meet accessibility audit	<10 %	+ to 30%	+ to 40%	GO
4.1.2 Ensure that these programs using online processes for applications or to manage services are designed for maximum accessibility	# of agencies, programs and/or organizations participating in BROADBANDiNEI Initiative	<10 %	+ to 30%	+ to 40%	BCORD GO
	# of ASG websites that meet accessibility audit	<10 %	+ to 30%	+ to 40%	GO

GOAL 4: CYBERSECURITY - ENABLE AMERICAN SAMOA TO SECURELY PARTICIPATE IN GLOBAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Objective/Strategy	Potential KPI	Baseline	Near-Term	Long-Term	Data Collection
4.2 Cybersecurity					
4.2.1 Promote territorial policies that govern online privacy and cybersecurity in consideration of unique needs of covered populations	Draft 1 territorial legislation on cybersecurity; inclusive of the needs of all covered populations.	0	1 legislation	1 legislation	GO
4.2.2 Ensure that online privacy, cybersecurity, and misinformation educational resources are available to all American Samoa residents focusing on for elderly, veteran, individuals with disabilities, low-income household, individuals with language barriers, ethnic minorities, rural households and incarcerated population	# of educational resources developed on online privacy, cybersecurity, misinformation	1	10 - 20 educational resources developed	50 - 70 training delivered annually	GO
	# of educational resources distributed on online privacy, cybersecurity, misinformation	1	1 - 3 training delivered annually	5 - 10 training delivered annually	GO

* Baseline data will be determined with the Capacity Grant funding.

GOAL 4: CYBERSECURITY - ENABLE AMERICAN SAMOA TO SECURELY PARTICIPATE IN GLOBAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Objective/Strategy	Potential KPI	Baseline	Near-Term	Long-Term	Data Collection
<p>4.2.3 Cultivate and promote efforts by private sector and community organizations to provide online privacy and cybersecurity training to covered populations</p>	<p># of individual completing a cybersecurity or internet safety program: elderly, veteran, individuals with disabilities, low-income household, individuals with language barriers, ethnic minorities, rural households and incarcerated population</p>	<p>0%*</p>	<p>Increase to 30%</p>	<p>Increase to 50%</p>	<p>Subgrantees</p>
<p>4.2.4 Support alignment of activities with the Territory Cybersecurity Plan</p>	<p># of programs in cybersecurity for all American Samoa residents</p>	<p>>10%</p>	<p>Increase to 30%</p>	<p>Increase to 50%</p>	<p>Subgrantees</p>
<p>4.2.5 IT/ICT Workforce Development Program for qualified IT/ICT staff or personnel in cybersecurity. For example, training for industry certifications and development of testing centers.</p>	<p># of qualified individual in cybersecurity for all American Samoa residents</p>	<p>0%*</p>	<p>Increase by 5%</p>	<p>Increase by 25%</p>	<p>Subgrantees</p>

* Baseline data will be determined with the Capacity Grant funding.

Alignment with Territorial Goals and Outcomes:

These goals and indicators support territorial goals and objectives stated in plans including but not limited to the American Samoa State Plan for the Library Services and Technology Act, Comprehensive territorial economic strategic plan; the American Samoa Department of Education Technology Plan; the WIOA Plan; 2021-2026 ASTBS addressing:

- **Essential Services:** Establish warm and hotlines for emergency technical support; Expansion, Adoption and Resilience Emergency Communications Network; Strengthen disaster response capabilities and community resiliency through broadband.
- **Economic Outcomes:** Build a robust business environment and business ecosystem; Strengthen current industries and develop new industries; Strengthen secondary economic development support systems; Support and promote opportunities to use broadband to support and promote local, rural, veteran-owned, women-owned and minority owned businesses. P.5.7 Incentivize technology and broadband driven investments; P.5.10 Launch eCommerce Island wide Initiative
- **Education Outcomes:** Provide necessary tools for the local population to increase skills to support our local economy including affordable internet, access to safe and secure devices, and upskilling our workforce; Deliver training for IT Professional Workforce; Create smart classrooms and campuses by providing broadband access campus wide; Promoting a system of workforce development that responds to the lifelong learning needs of the Territory's workforce; Dedicated to meeting the informational, technological, and cultural literacy needs of all age groups by providing both current and historical reading and instructional materials in a variety of formats; Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support their needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills.

Barriers and Gaps

Privacy and cybersecurity are of great concern to our elderly population. The Samoan culture is a trusting culture, where information are shared freely amongst family members. Regardless, it is still imperative to have a safe environment for all American Samoa residents to engage with broadband enabled devices. Funding towards the BROADBANDiNEI DEq Plan and Goal 4 will allow increased digital literacy training programs that will in turn increase safer usage of the Internet on an individual level.

Potential Activities

- Encourage the adoption of BROADBANDiNEI Initiative across the Territory to ensure information provided online meets current accessibility standards.
- Provide funding opportunities to support BROADBANDiNEI initiatives to support digital transitions of public resources and service.
- Ensure that these programs using online processes for applications or to manage services are designed for maximum accessibility,
- Enlist the support of organizations to build awareness and disseminate information about cybersecurity threats.
- Install security measures, where appropriate, at free public Wi-Fi and charging points to allay safety concerns about and deter unsavory loiterers.
- Provide regular forums among participating public agencies to discuss successes, challenges, appropriate responses, and improvements.
- Support additional training contextualized to occupational digital skills in partnership with workforce stakeholders, including lower-wage employers. While some basic skills are applicable across a wide variety of contexts, others are specific to a type of job (e.g., construction, quick service).
- Increase opportunities for advanced skill training as part of workforce upskilling or reskilling, primarily through the community college system and in response to employer needs.
- Support activities related to covered populations within the Territory Cybersecurity Plan
- Partner with public and/or private entities to make privacy and cybersecurity education resources available online

Potential Partners

Achievement of these goals will continue to be a collaboration between key partners such as the American Samoa Community College, Pacific Center in Human Security, various American Samoa Government agencies, Feleti Barstow Public Library, and nonprofit community organizations.



5.2 Timeline

The strategies outlined in this plan are to be carried out by the BCORD Office in collaboration with community anchor institutions. The American Samoa BROADBANDiNEI Digital Equity Plan is anticipated to launch and implement activities from 2024 to 2028. During the implementation phase, the BCORD Office will act as a convener, facilitator, connector, and champion of digital equity and inclusion efforts for American Samoa.

Goal 1: AFFORDABLE BROADBAND ACCESS - Improve the quality of life afforded through services and access to affordable broadband & internet service for covered populations																				
Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.1 Conduct outreach to covered population to provide details about affordability programs																				
1.2 Coordinate future initiatives addressing affordability to ensure that they are targeted to fill gaps in federal and local support and equitably improve access for covered populations																				
1.3 Support and promote veteran, minority and/or women-owned local businesses through the use of broadband																				
1.4 Coordination territory wide efforts to promote digital equity including an updated household survey																				

Goal 2: RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS - Develop an organizational, program and technical infrastructure that include governance, policies and regulations, collaborations and partnerships permitting American Samoa to become an effective part of the global digital village																				
Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2.1 Develop a body for long-term territory-wide oversight to promote broadband availability, reliability, affordability and accessibility for covered populations																				
2.2 Ensure the plan is regularly evaluated and updated																				
2.3 Strengthen disaster response capabilities and community resiliency through broadband.																				
2.4 Prioritize funding and investment in policies that advance digital equity.																				

Goal 3: TECHNOLOGY LITERACY - Promote technology literacy at all levels																				
Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Device Availability and Technical Support																				
3.1.1 Support the delivery of outreach and training to covered population about digital literacy																				
3.1.2 Encourage and promote private sector efforts to increase access to devices and/or lower costs of devices through computer refurbishing, recycling and/or training																				
3.1.3 Develop and maintain technical support for residents to ensure that programs using online processes can be accessed and used broadly. Examples may include a hotline for technical support for devices; a live virtual support system; a website frequently asked questions, etc...																				
Digital Skills																				
3.2.1 Cultivate and promote efforts by the private sector and community-based organizations to provide digital skill training and technical support to covered populations.																				
3.2.2 Establish a Territory-wide Framework for Digital Skills Attainment. For example, identify best practices and provide guidance on integrating digital skill development into K-12 and post-secondary education, workforce training, and other public training and programming.																				
3.2.3 IT/ICT Workforce Development Program for qualified IT/ICT staff or personnel																				
3.2.4 Support the delivery of telehealth through training for healthcare providers; patient support on- and off-island referral, care coordination and continuity of care.																				

Goal 4: CYBERSECURITY - Enable American Samoa to securely participate in global, national, regional and community information infrastructure																				
Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Accessibility and Inclusivity of public resources and services																				
4.1.1 Encourage the adoption of BROADBANDINEI Initiative across the Territory to ensure information provided online meets current accessibility standards.																				
4.1.2 Develop long-term mechanisms to continue improving accessibility and inclusivity as technology and unmet needs for covered populations change over time.																				
4.1.3 Ensure that programs using online processes for applications or to manage services are designed for maximum accessibility and also integrated as much as possible to simplify access to the public.																				
Cybersecurity																				
4.2.1 Promote territorial policies that govern online privacy and cybersecurity in consideration of unique needs of covered populations																				
4.2.2 Ensure that online privacy and cybersecurity educational resources are available																				
4.2.3 Cultivate and promote efforts by private sector and community organizations to provide online privacy and cybersecurity training to covered populations																				
4.2.4 Support alignment of activities with the Territory Cybersecurity Plan																				
4.2.5 IT/ICT Workforce Development Program for qualified IT/ICT staff or personnel in cybersecurity. For example, training for industry certifications and development of testing centers.																				

5.3 Plan Evaluation and Maintenance

This plan will be evaluated on an annual basis and updated when necessary in coordination with NTIA and the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program reporting cycle.

Plan maintenance responsibilities include:

- Maintaining a plan review and revision schedule.
- Reviewing all plan components and proposed changes for consistency.
- Ensuring key partner engagement of proposed changes.
- Ensuring notifications of approved changes are made and disseminated.
- Maintaining an accurate record of changes.



6. CONCLUSION

The investment in digital equity translates to improved quality of life for people like the single parent burdened/pressured with choices on how to spend their last \$100. Broadband is a necessity. We must equip all our residents with digital tools and skills along with the confidence to use and succeed. This report has explored the state of digital equity in American Samoa. While investments on the infrastructure side have been significant, there is much work to be done to close the digital gaps with respect to digital literacy, access to devices, affordability, and many technical support services. American Samoa's rurality exacerbates existing social and economic disparities, and hinders opportunities for individuals and communities. Access to technology and the Internet is critical for education, employment, healthcare, and civic engagement, among other areas. Without it, individuals are at a disadvantage, and the territory as a whole cannot reach its full potential.

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E le sua se lolo i se popo e tasi – It takes more than one coconut to produce a considerable amount of coconut milk. Coconut milk is a substantial part of the Samoan diet and an adequate amount is needed to provide for a delicious meal.

This document is the result of many efforts, discussions, engagements and a collective thought process. - Samoan Proverb

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7. APPENDICES



7.1 Digital Equity Engagement Tracker

Title	Date	Type	#	Covered Household	Aging Individuals	Incarcerated Individuals	Veterans	Individuals with Disabilities	Individuals with a language barrier	Racial or Ethnic Minority	Rural Residents
BCORD Working Group Meeting #1	3/7/2023	Other	6	X				X	X		X
Digital Equity Brain Storming Session	3/8/2023	Meeting/Presentation	1	X					X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #2	3/23/2023	Meeting/Presentation	6	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #3	3/30/2023	Meeting/Presentation	6	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #4	4/13/2023	Meeting/Presentation	6	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #5	5/4/2023	Meeting/Presentation	6	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #6	5/18/2023	Meeting/Presentation	5	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #7	5/27/2023	Meeting/Presentation	6	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #8	5/31/2023	Meeting/Presentation	5	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #9	6/1/2023	Meeting/Presentation	6	X				X	X		X
Roadshow Stakeholder Visitation: ASTCA	6/6/2023	Meeting/Presentation	6	X					X		X
93KHJ Radio Show	6/7/2023	Meeting/Presentation	3	X	X				X		X

Title	Date	Type	#	Covered Household	Aging Individuals	Incarcerated Individuals	Veterans	Individuals with Disabilities	Individuals with a language barrier	Racial or Ethnic Minority	Rural Residents
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #2	7/13/2023	Meeting/Presentation	8	X					X		X
Roadshow Stakeholder Visitation: PDS	7/13/2023	Meeting/Presentation	2	X					X		X
ASTBS/BCORD Luncheon	7/19/2023	Meeting/Presentation	16	X					X		X
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #3	7/19/2023	Meeting/Presentation	8	X					X		X
KVZK Manu Program	7/19/2023	Listening Session (Virtual)	TV audience	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #11	7/27/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #4	8/2/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #12	8/4/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #5	8/9/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #13	08/10/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #6	8/16/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #14	08/17/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #7	8/23/2023	Meeting/Presentation	8	X					X		X

Title	Date	Type	#	Covered Household	Aging Individuals	Incarcerated Individuals	Veterans	Individuals with Disabilities	Individuals with a language barrier	Racial or Ethnic Minority	Rural Residents
BCORD Working Group Meeting #15	08/24/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #16	08/31/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #17	09/07/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
BEAD/DE brainstorming session	09/07/2023	Meeting/Presentation	3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #18	09/14/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #19	09/21/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X				X	X		X
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #8	09/27/2023	Meeting/Presentation	12	X					X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #21	10/05/2023	Meeting/Presentation	9	X				X	X		X
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #9	10/24/2023	Meeting/Presentation	11	X					X		X
BCORD Working Group Meeting #22	10/25/2023	Meeting/Presentation	9	X				X	X		X
Stakeholder Meeting (ASTO)	11/1/2023	Meeting/Presentation	2	X					X		X
Provider Meeting (ASTCA)	11/2/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
Stakeholder Meeting (e911)	11/3/2023	Meeting/Presentation	2	X					X		X

Title	Date	Type	#	Covered Household	Aging Individuals	Incarcerated Individuals	Veterans	Individuals with Disabilities	Individuals with a language barrier	Racial or Ethnic Minority	Rural Residents
Broadband Working Group Meeting #23	11/9/2023	Meeting/Presentation	9	X					X		X
Provider Meeting (Bluesky)	11/9/2023	Meeting/Presentation	6	X					X		X
Stakeholder Meeting (Fono)	11/9/2023	Meeting/Presentation	4	X					X		X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #24	11/16/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
Stakeholder Meeting (Talofa Eats)	11/29/2023	Meeting/Presentation	2	X					X		X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #25	11/30/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
Stakeholder Meeting (Klaod)	12/1/2023	Meeting/Presentation	2	X					X		X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #26	12/7/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #27	12/14/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #28	12/28/2023	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
BEAD/DE brainstorming session	09/07/2023	Meeting/Presentation	3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #29	1/11/2024	Meeting/Presentation	9	X					X		X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #30	2/1/2024	Meeting/Presentation	9	X					X		X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #31	2/15/2024	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X

Title	Date	Type	#	Covered Household	Aging Individuals	Incarcerated Individuals	Veterans	Individuals with Disabilities	Individuals with a language barrier	Racial or Ethnic Minority	Rural Residents
Broadband Working Group Meeting #32	2/22/2024	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #10	2/28/2024	Meeting/Presentation	11	X					X		X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #33	2/29/2024	Meeting/Presentation	7	X					X		X
Stakeholder Meeting: Foeiletini Foundation (PITA)	3/6/2024	Meeting/Presentation	1	X			X			X	X
Broadband Working Group Meeting #34	3/7/2024	Meeting/Presentation	9	X							X
Stakeholder Meeting: Feleti Barstow Public Library	3/7/2024	Meeting/Presentation	1				X			X	
Stakeholder Meeting: Parents of Children with Special Needs	3/11/2024	Meeting/Presentation	4	X				X		X	X
Stakeholder Meeting: Office of Protection and Advocacy	3/11/2024	Meeting/Presentation	5	X	X			X	X	X	X
Stakeholder Meeting: Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	3/12/2024	Meeting/Presentation	4	X				X	X	X	X
Stakeholder Meeting: Territorial Administration on Aging	3/12/2024	Meeting/Presentation	7		X			X			
Stakeholder Meeting: Office of Veterans and Military Affairs	3/13/2024	Meeting/Presentation	9		X		X	X			

Title	Date	Type	#	Covered Household	Aging Individuals	Incarcerated Individuals	Veterans	Individuals with Disabilities	Individuals with a language barrier	Racial or Ethnic Minority	Rural Residents
Stakeholder Meeting: Department of Corrections	3/13/2024	Meeting/Presentation	1			X					
Broadband Working Group Meeting #35	3/14/2024	Meeting/Presentation	12	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stakeholder Meeting (ASG Veterans Affairs Office)	3/20/2024	Other	30		X		X				
Broadband Working Group Meeting #36	3/21/2024	Meeting/Presentation	9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NDPTC Third Thursday	3/21/2024	Meeting/Presentation	87								
Office Hours #4: BCORD Update - Digital Equity	3/22/2024	Meeting/Presentation	9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Office Hours #5: TAOA	3/28/2024	Meeting/Presentation	7								
Broadband Steering Committee (BSC) #11	10/24/2023	Meeting/Presentation	11	X					X		X
Office Hours #6: Veterans	4/5/2024	Meeting/Presentation	74			X	X	X			
Listening Session	4/9/2024	Listening Session (In-person)	13	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Office Hours #6: Disabled Community	4/12/2024	Meeting/Presentation	12					X			

7.2 Public Comment Summary and Response

Public Comment	BCORD Response
<p>I believe that many of our local internet users are only interested in technology for entertainment purposes; for example, social media. Instead of using technology in innovative ways to make daily tasks more efficient. Our local bank is still inundated with customers in it's local branches. How can your program bring awareness to the benefits of technology like online banking? I no longer pay my church tithes & offering by bringing cash or a check to church. On payday I simply go online to pay ASTCA & ASPA bills so I don't have to wait in line. During my elementary & high school I struggled to get to the Public Library in Utulei in order to do research. Now my children have instant access to the world's largest library. But how do I teach my kids to not simply cut & paste. What websites offer legitimate information? Today's generation is grappling with these issues. Now AI is in the mix how can our society continue to be creative with many turning to AI when writing & for graphics? What is the American Samoa Broadband Office working on in the realm of not only digital equity but these other issues I mentioned above?</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The BCORD office acknowledges the issues you have brought forth in your comment concerning the use of technology and broadband in our community. These thoughts and recommendations will be taken into consideration in the final version of our digital equity plan.</p>
<p>The "American Samoa BROADBAND iNei Digital Equity Plan," despite its grand aspirations, is deeply flawed. Its lack of specificity, unrealistic optimism, and superficial treatment of critical issues, particularly cybersecurity, reveal a document that is more aspirational than operational. The choice to set cybersecurity baselines at 0%, even acknowledging the involvement of cybersecurity professionals, borders on the farcical. It suggests either a profound ignorance of the current state or a disingenuous attempt to mask the lack of preparatory work. This plan requires not just revision but a complete overhaul, especially in its approach to cybersecurity. Without grounding in the realities of digital equity challenges particularly the nuanced, evolving threats in cybersecurity it risks being dismissed as a well-</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The BCORD Office acknowledges the challenges faced with data collection to support these objectives. American Samoa presently lacks much of the baseline data already available to the states and some of the other insular areas of the United States. A specific project for the BCORD Office as a component of the DEq plan will be to collect and revise the DEq plan to address these data inadequacies, funding the data collection either in coordination with the DE capacity grant funding or through other appropriate funding sources.</p> <p>The BCORD Office would like to specifically acknowledge the outlining of cybersecurity throughout the comment. Cybersecurity is an important component, and this plan will focus efforts at the target populations outlined within the plan. Cybersecurity itself is a rather</p>

Public Comment

meaning but ultimately impractical attempt at addressing digital equity in American Samoa.

The "American Samoa BROADBAND Digital iNei Equity Plan" aspires to tackle digital equity with a broad and ambitious vision. However, ambition alone does not a viable plan make. Upon detailed examination, especially from a cybersecurity lens, the document reveals itself to be fundamentally flawed, lacking in both depth and actionable specifics across all its purported objectives. The plan's wide-reaching vision, while admirable in intent, sprawls across too many areas without delving deep into any. This lack of prioritization dilutes the plan's potential impact, rendering it a superficial overview rather than a targeted strategy.

The strategies and objectives, though seemingly well-intentioned, are frustratingly vague. The document reads more like a wish list than a concrete roadmap. The glaring absence of detailed, actionable steps, particularly in critical areas like cybersecurity, makes it difficult to take the plan seriously.

The document's failure to provide detailed implementation plans is alarming. It sketches out what needs to be done without any indication of how these tasks will be achieved. This lack of specificity renders the plan practically useless to anyone looking for a feasible action plan.

The optimistic tone regarding resources is unwarranted and misleading. The plan's lack of a solid framework for securing, managing, and deploying resources, especially for cybersecurity initiatives, is not just naive; it's irresponsible. Stakeholder Engagement: While the document boasts of stakeholder engagement, it fails to convincingly detail how this input has shaped the plan. The engagement feels superficial, lacking in meaningful integration of expert insights, particularly from the cybersecurity domain.

BCORD Response

large topic ranging both from an enterprise perspective (government, business) to a personal and consumer perspective. For the purposes of this plan, efforts will be focused on how individuals and consumers within these target populations use of technology and ensuring they are able to do so safely and securely.

The intent of the DEq Capacity funding is to start conversations, build data and direction and provide pilot investments in the target populations that are in need in our community in context to the scope of the Digital Equity Act – this plan is the start of a new chapter in community engagement specific to information technology and the use of information technology within our community. The BCORD Office acknowledges this will not address everything, it will however open the door to further discussion and engagement on these vital topics impacting our community.

Public Comment

BCORD Response

As a cybersecurity professional, the treatment of cybersecurity within the plan is nothing short of negligent. The decision to set baseline metrics at 0% is absurd, suggesting a lack of foundational assessment or a severe underestimation of the +G8+G10

The plan's acknowledgment of the importance of accessibility and affordability rings hollow without concrete, sustainable solutions. This omission is a significant oversight, given the plan's stated goals.

Charity Wound Care and Geriatric Medical Services

Under federally funded Medicare insurance, home health is a billable expense for private, for profit, medical providers.

Modern, cloud based communication health technology allows cloud based 5g internet wireless technology to provide real time laboratory, diagnostic, and screening service available in the patient home.

Available GPS location mapping services coupled with data management and computerized medical billing enable communities to apply wireless broadband services to attack the root causes of amputation and renal dialysis.

Broadband connectivity enhances intervention and preventive medical care for all eligible patients.

Please find attached Charity Wound Care and Geriatric Medical Services federal medical licenses

Thank you for the comment and your interest in digital equity projects. The BCORD Office is in the process of developing requirements for eligible entities to apply for funding.

Eligible entities may propose projects that:

- Implement digital equity plan and/or programs and activities
- Pursue digital inclusion activities
- Report regarding digital inclusion activities
- Update or Maintain digital equity plans
- Improve accessibility and inclusivity of public resources
- Digital literacy and skills education
- Facilitate the adoption of high-speed internet by covered populations

Entities eligible to apply for funding include:

- Internet Service Providers (e.g. BlueSky, ASTCA)
- Electric co-ops
- Non-profit organizations (e.g. Hope House, EPIC, ABLE, Foeoletini Foundation)
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Public or private utilities
- Tribal entities
- Government Agencies (e.g. TAOA, ASCC, DPS, Office of VA, OPAD, Voc Rehab, Fonon)

Public Comment

Public Comment: Broadband Digital Equity Plan

American Samoa is positioned to build a robust high tech, high wage industrial base concurrent with existing natural resources and available digital technology.

American Samoa is sorely lacking in workforce capacity specific to digital technology.

The broadbandINEi digital equity plan is designed and intended to provide digital workforce capacity training to effect a sustainable economy and capable workforce.

The American Samoa Economic Development Council, a community based Non-Government Organization (NGO) proposes application of BCORD funds to provide necessary workforce capacity. The main proponents of digital learning include;

Robotics
Artificial intelligence
Computer selectivity

To achieve the economic development result in line with the American Samoa Department of Commerce Economic goals, ASDEC has partnered with Impossible Metals LLC , the global leader in environmentally safe mineral extraction digital technology. A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding is attached

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VwkWfd70bkYzCuiSn7ToKus3wRgsCL4s/view?usp=drivesdk>

BCORD Response

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Eligible entities may propose projects that:

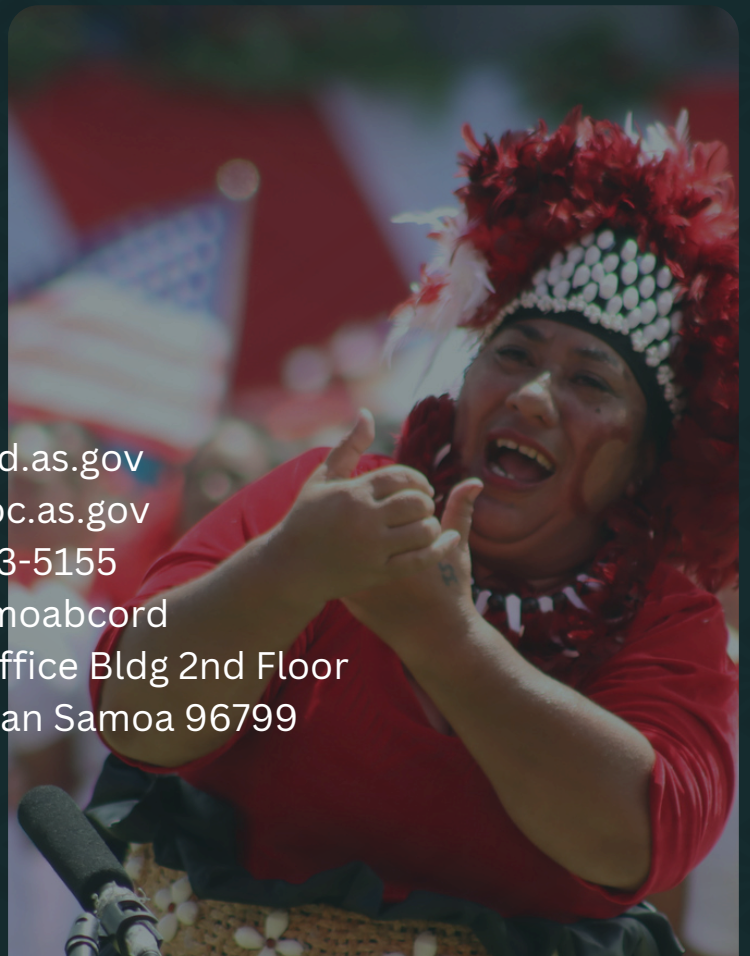
- Implement digital equity plan and/or programs and activities
- Pursue digital inclusion activities
- Report regarding digital inclusion activities
- Update or Maintain digital equity plans
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- Digital literacy and skills education
- Facilitate the adoption of high-speed internet by covered populations

Entities eligible to apply for funding include:

- Internet Service Providers (e.g. BlueSky, ASTCA)
- Electric co-ops
- Non-profit organizations (e.g. Hope House, EPIC, ABLE, Foeoletini Foundation)
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Public or private utilities
- Tribal entities
- Government Agencies (e.g. TAOA, ASCC, DPS, Office of VA, OPAD, Voc Rehab, Fono)



Images included in this plan are from public events and celebrations around American Samoa, including BCORD outreach events; Flag Day Celebration 2024; farmer's markets; and American Samoa Government site visits to Manu'a and Swains Island.



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