



COMMIT TO  
**Connect**

**engAGED**  
The National Resource Center  
for Engaging Older Adults

# 2024 National Summit to Increase Social Connections

**USAging**



**May 14-15, 2024**

# Welcome and Purpose Setting

- Sandy Markwood, Chief Executive Officer, USAging
- Lori Gerhard, Director at the Office of Interagency Innovation, Administration for Community Living (ACL)

# Summit Housekeeping

## Recording and Slides

- The recording and slides from both days of the Summit will be shared following the event on our website: [www.committtoconnect.org](http://www.committtoconnect.org)

## Audio Options

- Use your computer speakers, **OR** dial in using the phone number in your registration email.

## Questions and Answers (Q&A)

- You can submit questions for the speakers at any time during this presentation. On the Zoom module on the bottom of your screen, click the Q&A icon, type your question in the box and submit.

## Chat Feature

- The Chat feature allows webinar attendees, the host, co-hosts and panelists to communicate for the duration of the webinar.

# Accessibility and Support

## **ASL/CART Services**

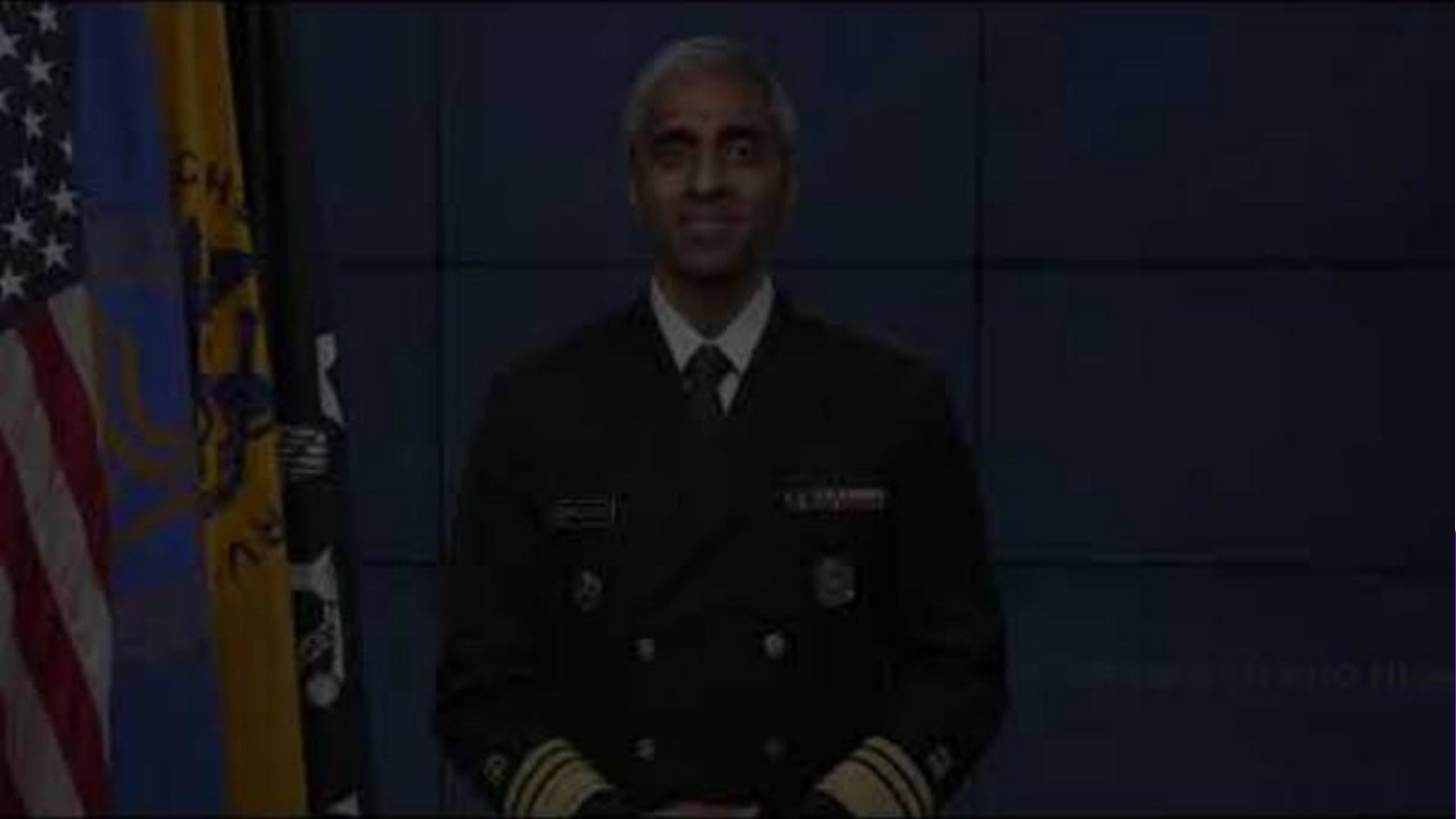
- ASL/CART services will be provided for this event. A video stream of an ASL interpreter will be pinned on the screen so all attendees can view the interpreter.
- To access CART live transcription of the event, click on the CC Live Transcript button in the control bar at the bottom of the Zoom window.

## **Technical Assistance**

- To get our attention if you need tech assistance: Raise or Lower Hand: Alt + Y

## **Screen Reader Users: Reduce unwanted chatter**

- Request speech on demand: Insert, Spacebar, "S"



# Keynote: Future of Technology and Social Engagement

- Kelly Cronin, Deputy Administrator, Center for Innovation and Partnership, ACL (moderator)
- Rani Snyder, Vice President, Program, The John A. Hartford Foundation
- Steve Ewell, Executive Director, Consumer Technology Association Foundation
- Eddie Garcia, Founder and Board Chair, Foundation for Social Connection



The  
John A. Hartford  
Foundation



# ACL National Summit to Increase Social Connections: Future of Technology and Social Engagement

*May 14, 2024*



Rani Snyder, MPA  
*Vice President, Program*  
*The John A. Hartford Foundation*





The  
John A. Hartford  
Foundation

A private philanthropy  
based in New York  
City, established by  
family owners of the  
A&P grocery chain  
in 1929.



DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE CARE OF OLDER ADULTS



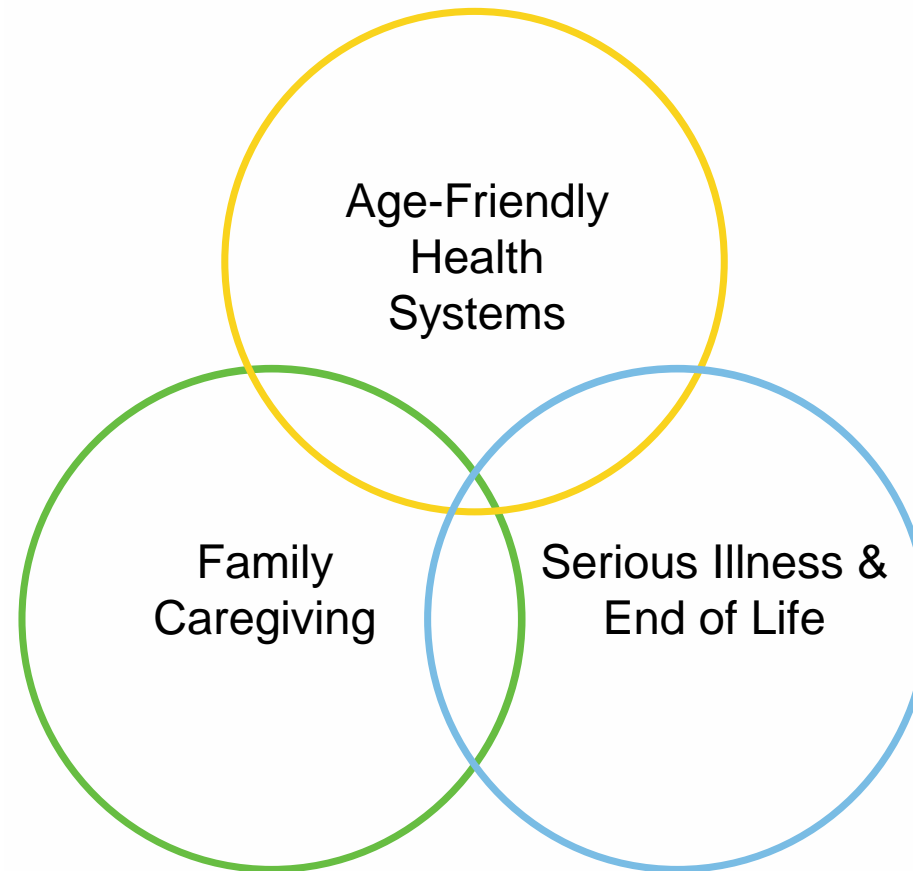
## Mission



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DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE CARE OF OLDER ADULTS

## PRIORITY AREAS



DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE CARE OF OLDER ADULTS



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## Shaping a Social Isolation Strategy for Older Adults

JAHF convening hosted by New York Academy of Medicine in January 2024





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## Shaping a Social Isolation Strategy for Older Adults

### Goal of Convening:

- Discuss **collaborative action** that can improve the care of older adults by addressing social isolation and loneliness
- Review **existing evidence** to determine what actions a Foundation can take

NYAM



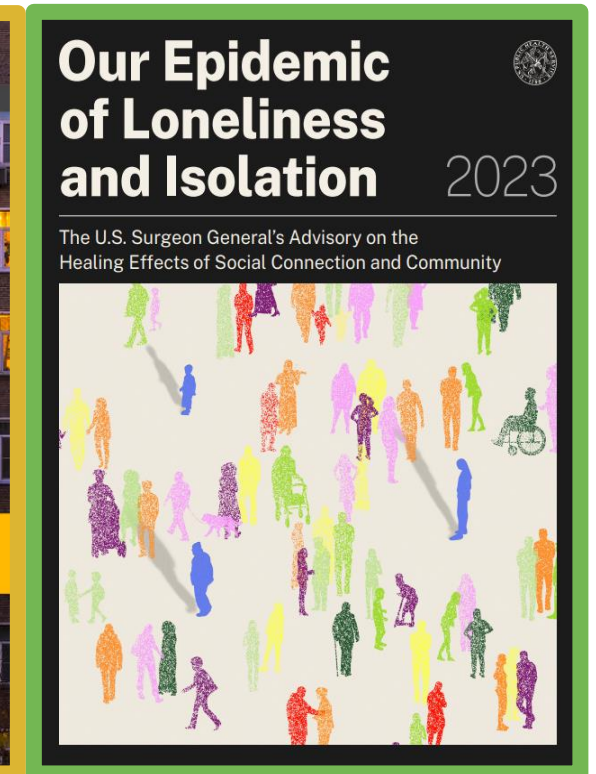
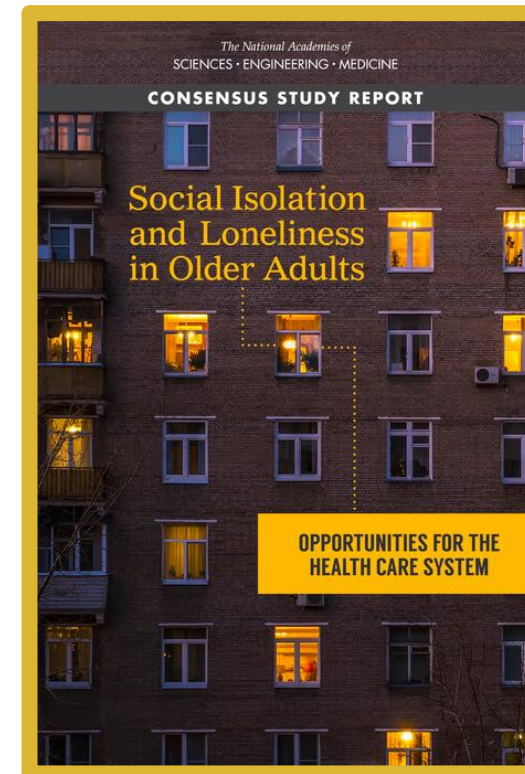


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Foundation

# Building on Key Reports

2020 National Academies of Sciences,  
Engineering, and Medicine:  
*Social Isolation and Loneliness in  
Older Adults: Opportunities for the  
Healthcare System*

2023 U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory:  
*Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation:  
The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on  
the Healing Effects of Social Connection  
and Community*





# Opportunities for Implementation Pt 1



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1. Inclusion as a social determinant of health
2. Training of professionals
3. Partnerships between community-based organizations and health care
4. Building a national resource center



<https://www.nyam.org/publications/publication/shaping-social-isolation-strategy-older-adults/>



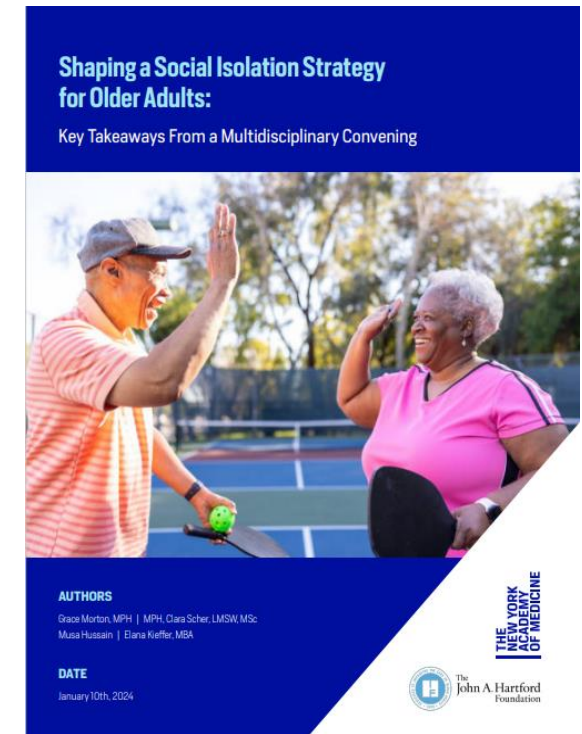
# Opportunities for Implementation

## Pt 2



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John A. Hartford  
Foundation

5. Policy efforts on historically underserved older adults
6. Measurement and documentation
7. Inclusion as active partners in research and evaluation
8. Technology



<https://www.nyam.org/publications/publication/shaping-social-isolation-strategy-older-adults/>







The  
John A. Hartford  
Foundation

**Thank You!**  
**[Rani.Snyder@johnahartford.org](mailto:Rani.Snyder@johnahartford.org)**  
**[WWW.JOHNAHARTFORD.ORG](http://WWW.JOHNAHARTFORD.ORG)**



DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE CARE OF OLDER ADULTS

# **Nationwide Network of Champions and Additional Resources from Commit to Connect and engAGED**

- Katie Clark, Policy Analyst, Office of Interagency Innovation, ACL
- Meredith Hanley, Director of Community Capacity Building, USAging





Resources from Commit to Connect

# Commit to Connect

- Aim is to connect people living with isolation and loneliness with programs and resources to build the social connections they need to thrive
- funded primarily by the U.S. Administration for Community Living
- USAging serves as the Coordinating Center
- [www.committtoconnect.org](http://www.committtoconnect.org)



Funding for this initiative was made possible by contract no. HHSP233201500088I from ACL. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



# Strategy

- Increase awareness and availability of programs and strategies that address social isolation and loneliness and grow social connections
- Build and strengthen collaboration with current and potential partners to leverage our collective efforts, resources, innovations and activities to increase social connection in the U.S.



# Key efforts:

- **Technical assistance and training activities**
  - National Summit to Increase Social Connections
  - Professional and consumer resources
  - Webinars and Office Hours
- **Communities of Practice**
  - Link agencies, networks, and CBOs with subject-matter experts
- **“Innovations Hub”** to encourage replication
  - Clearinghouse of 8-+ data-driven programs, interventions, and solutions
- **Engage an online Nationwide Network of Champions**
  - 485+ leaders at local, state, and national levels







[Home](#) [Communities](#) [Discussions](#) [Resources](#) [Events](#) [Directory](#) [About](#) [FAQs](#)

# Welcome to a Nationwide Network of Champions

Dedicated to Ending Social Isolation and Loneliness

[Become a champion!](#)



## Connect

Connect with peers, expand your network, and make a difference.

[Visit the Member Directory](#)



## Collaborate

Join in discussions, voice your opinion, and further your knowledge.

[Visit the Discussions Page](#)



## Explore

Explore, share resources, and inspire the work in your community.

[Visit the Resources Library](#)



## Learn

Learn more about the work Champions are doing to address SIL.

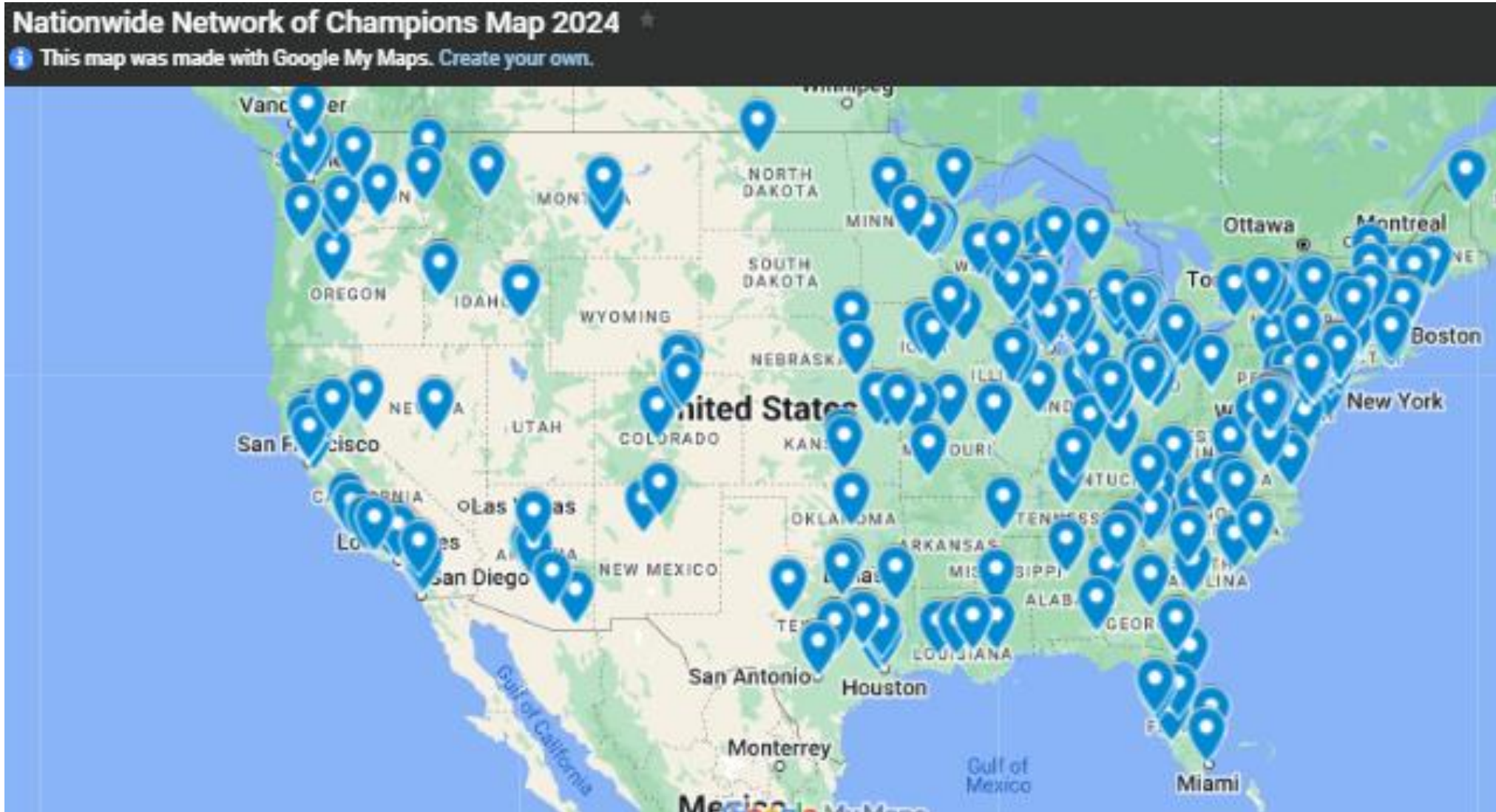
[Visit the Blog Page](#)

SIGN UP HERE: <https://committtoconnect.org/become-champion/>



COMMIT TO  
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# Map of NNOC



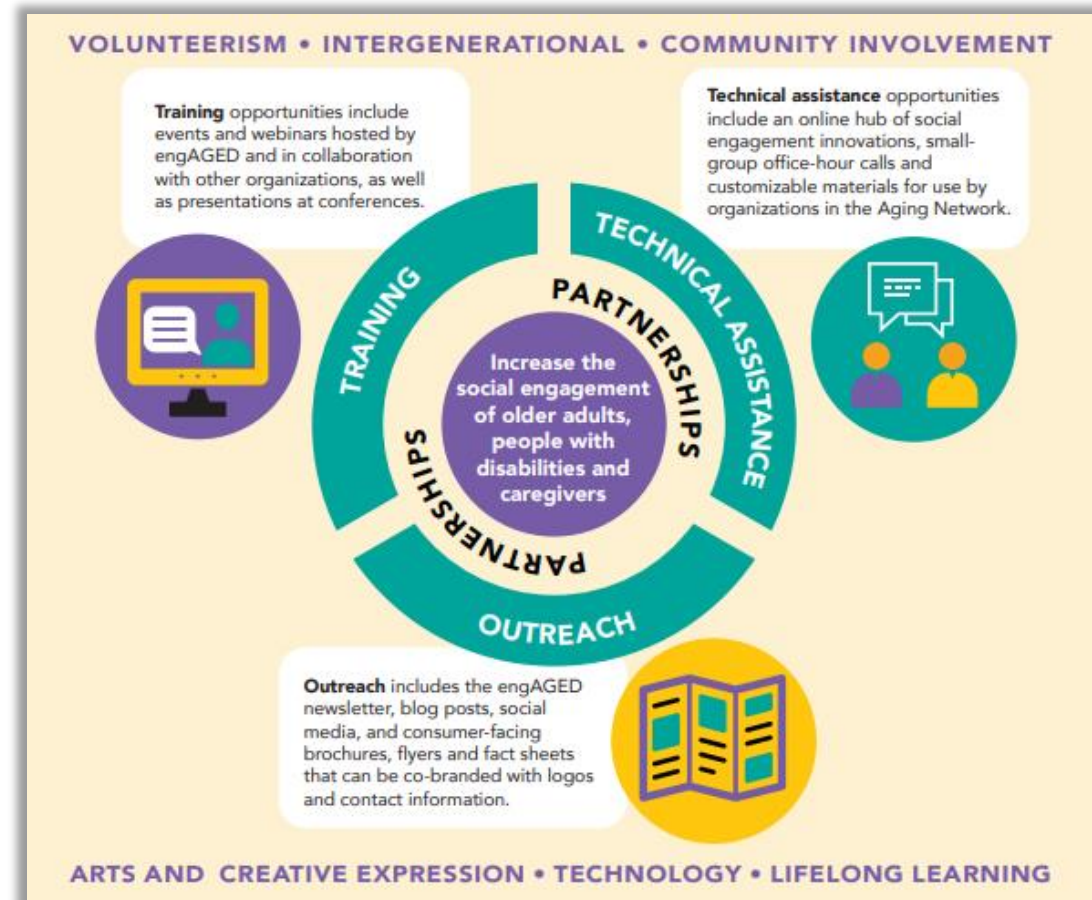
# The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults



# Overview of engAGED

- National effort to increase social engagement of older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers
- Activities of engAGED are supported by USAging and, in part, through a contract with the Administration for Community Living
- Partnered with Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP

[www.engagingolderadults.org](http://www.engagingolderadults.org)





# engAGED Resources

- Social Engagement Innovations Hub
- Consumer-facing materials
- Toolkits and template materials
- Publications for organizations
- Annual Virtual Summit
- Videos, blog posts, recorded webinars and more!



# Innovations Hub

- Now in partnership with Commit to Connect, the Innovations Hub is searchable by a variety of filters, including intervention type (such as technology)
- Also has a search function, where you can search for keywords such as hybrid, technology and more

[www.committtoconnect.org/innovations-hub/](http://www.committtoconnect.org/innovations-hub/)

[www.engagingolderadults.org/hub](http://www.engagingolderadults.org/hub)

**Social Engagement Innovations Hub**

**About**

The Social Engagement Innovations Hub is a clearinghouse of social connection best practices and evidence-based interventions, programs, and services. The Innovations Hub is intended to provide practitioners, implementers, and researchers with information on social connection interventions, programs, and services to encourage replication. The Innovations Hub is a joint activity of Commit to Connect and engAGED: The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults.

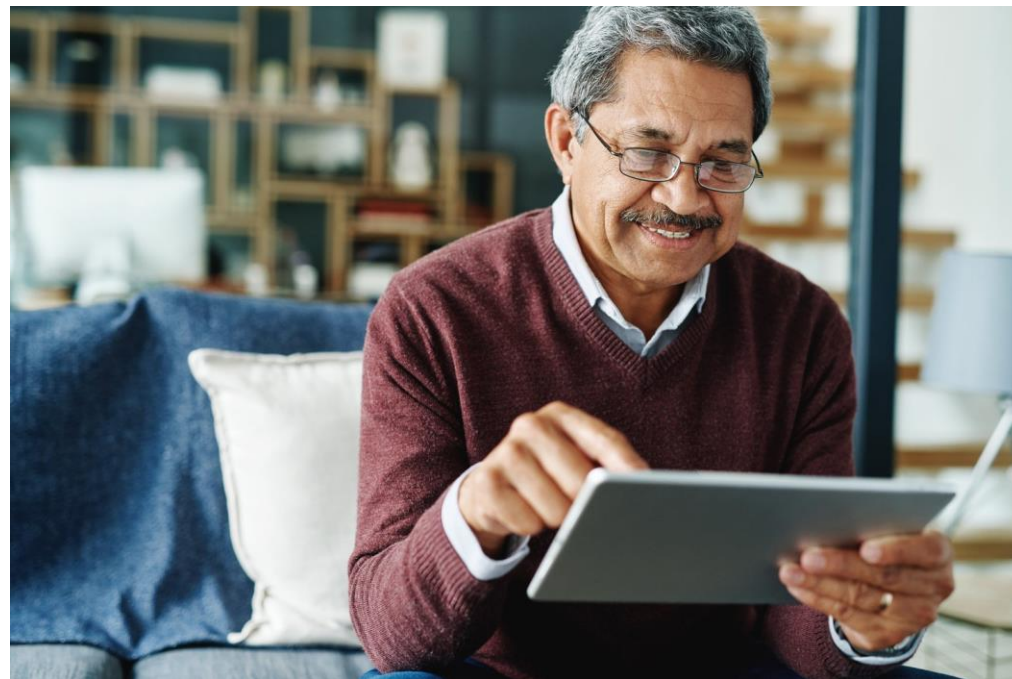
The Innovations Hub is searchable by a variety of filters and each summary contains important details to help support replication, including an overview of the example, role of partners involved, outcomes achieved, lessons learned, resources needed, and contact information. Read through our [Innovations Hub instructions](#) before getting started. If you have a social connection intervention, program, or service, consider submitting it to the Innovations Hub.

Filter 11 Sort

Caring Together, Living Bet...	Friendly Phone Calling	COAST-IT (Connecting Old...	Making Aging More Engag...
<b>ORGANIZATION NAME</b> AgeOptions	<b>ORGANIZATION NAME</b> Decatur Catholic Charities – Faith L...	<b>ORGANIZATION NAME</b> University of Colorado Anschutz M...	<b>ORGANIZATION NAME</b> SeniorAge
<b>CITY, STATE</b> Oak Park, IL	<b>CITY, STATE</b> Decatur, IL	<b>CITY, STATE</b> Denver, CO	<b>CITY, STATE</b> Springfield, MO
<b>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</b> Partnering with faith-based groups to offer social engagement activities for Black and Hispanic family caregivers.	<b>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</b> Older adults who are homebound receive phone calls from friendly volunteers.	<b>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</b> Pairs college health professional students with older adults for weekly intergenerational social phone calls and mentorship.	<b>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</b> Interactive blog with online activities to help older adults stay connected.
<b>INTERVENTION TYPE</b> Intergenerational Technology	<b>INTERVENTION TYPE</b> Intergenerational Volunteerism	<b>INTERVENTION TYPE</b> Health and Wellness Intergenerational	<b>INTERVENTION TYPE</b> Arts and Creative Expression Health
<b>POPULATION SERVED</b> Older Adults Caregivers	<b>POPULATION SERVED</b> Older Adults People with Disability	<b>POPULATION SERVED</b> Older Adults	<b>POPULATION SERVED</b> Older Adults People with Disability
<b>GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED</b> Suburban Urban	<b>GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED</b> Rural Urban Suburban	<b>GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED</b> Rural Frontier Suburban Urban	<b>GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED</b> Rural Suburban
<b>ORGANIZATION TYPE</b> Area Agency on Aging	<b>ORGANIZATION TYPE</b> Other Community-Based Organ...	<b>ORGANIZATION TYPE</b> University	<b>ORGANIZATION TYPE</b> Area Agency on Aging
<b>PARTNERS INVOLVED</b> Aging and Disability Resource C...	<b>PARTNERS INVOLVED</b> Area Agency on Aging Faith-bas	<b>PARTNERS INVOLVED</b> Aging and Disability Resource C...	<b>PARTNERS INVOLVED</b> Area Agency on Aging Arts grou
<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b> Private/philanthropic grant	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b> Older Americans Act Private/phil	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b> Other	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b> ...
<b>DESCRIPTION</b> Program Description AgeOptions, an Area Agency on Aging based in Oak Park, IL, developed the Caring Together...	<b>DESCRIPTION</b> Program Description Faith in Action of Macon County provides friendly phone calling services to reach homebound olde...	<b>DESCRIPTION</b> Program Description The University of Colorado (CU) Anschutz Division of Geriatrics and University of Colorado Hospital ...	<b>DESCRIPTION</b> Program Description Making Aging More Engaging is an interactive blog created by SeniorAge featuring a wide array o...

# Technology Booklet for Consumers

- Developed in partnership with the Eldercare Locator and OATS
- Consumer-facing booklet to help older adults tap into technology to stay engaged and connected
- Available in English and Spanish



# Online Safety Fact Sheets for Consumers

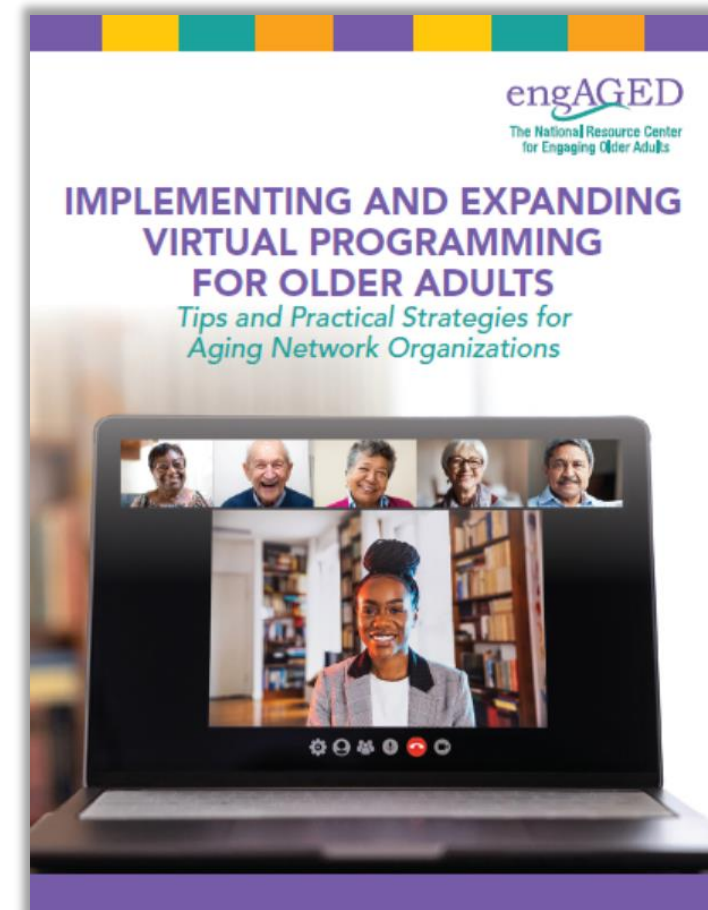
- OATS from AARP and engAGED created a series of fact sheets to provide older adults with tips and best practices to safely and securely engage online
  - Protecting Personal Information Online
  - Socializing Safely Online
  - Browsing the Internet Confidently





# Technology Manuals

- Virtual programming manual
- Hybrid programming manual
- Include considerations, tips and best practices for organizations



- [www.engagingolderadults.org](http://www.engagingolderadults.org)
- Facebook: [@engAGEDCenter](https://www.facebook.com/engAGEDCenter)
- X: [@engAGEDCenter](https://twitter.com/engAGEDCenter)

This initiative is funded in part by in part by contract no. HHSP233201500088I from ACL. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

# Stay Connected

**1. Become a Champion:**

<https://committoconnect.org/become-champion/>


**2. Visit the websites and sign up for the newsletters**  
to learn about upcoming events and resources:

<https://committoconnect.org/> and  
<https://www.engagingolderadults.org/>

**3. Browse the Social Engagement Innovations Hub**  
to learn about innovative, replicable programs,  
services, and interventions

**THANK YOU!**





**Please enjoy a 15-  
minute break**



# **Program Spotlight: National Telecommunications and Information Administration**

- Angela Bennett, Digital Equity Director, National Telecommunications and Information Administration

**INTERNET  
FOR ALL**

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# Digital Equity Act of 2021 Grant Programs

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May 14, 2024



# Topics for discussion

Overview of Digital Equity Programs

Social Determinants of Health

State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program

Key Dates and Deadlines

# Overview of Digital Equity Programs

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# The Digital Equity Act seeks to promote digital equity and inclusion



## BEAD

**\$42.45B**

### Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program

A program to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where we need it and increase adoption of high-speed internet.

*Today's focus*

## DIGITAL EQUITY

**\$2.75B**

### Digital Equity Act

Three programs that provide funding to promote digital inclusion and advance equity for all. They aim to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed internet to meet their needs and improve their lives.

## TRIBAL

**\$2.00B**

### Tribal Connectivity Technical Amendments

A program to help tribal communities expand high-speed internet access and adoption on tribal lands.

## MIDDLE MILE

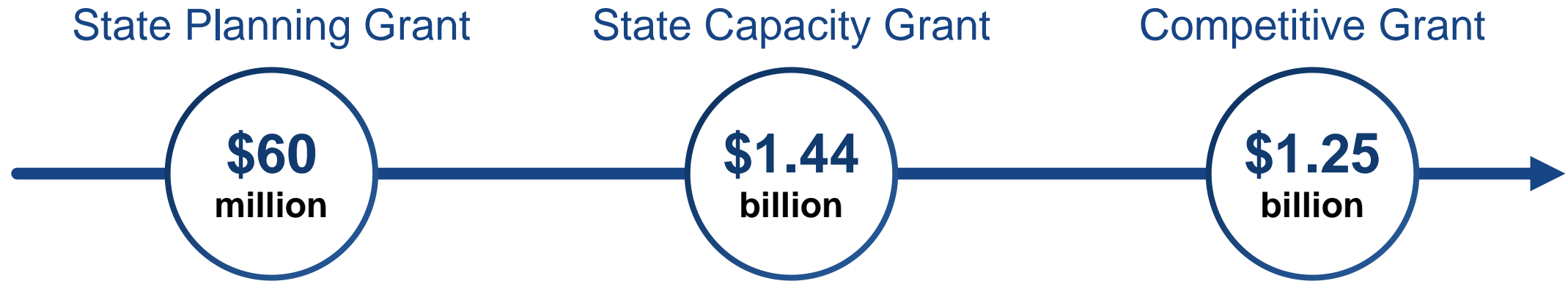
**\$1.00B**

### Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure

A program to expand middle mile infrastructure, to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas.



# There are two state formula grant programs, which are separate but connected, and a third competitive grant program



<b>Who</b>	Open to <b>U.S. States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (States)</b>	Open to U.S. States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, that <b>completed the State Planning Program</b>	Open to <b>certain entities</b> , such as political subdivisions, Tribal entities, nonprofits, community anchor institutions, local educational agencies, and workforce development orgs
<b>What</b>	Grants will be used to <b>develop a State Digital Equity Plan</b>	Grants will be used to <b>implement State Digital Equity Plans</b>	Grants will be used to <b>develop and implement digital inclusion activities</b>

Other U.S. territories, Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian orgs have a separate statutory set-aside and separate program requirements under the State Planning and Capacity Programs, as detailed on the next page

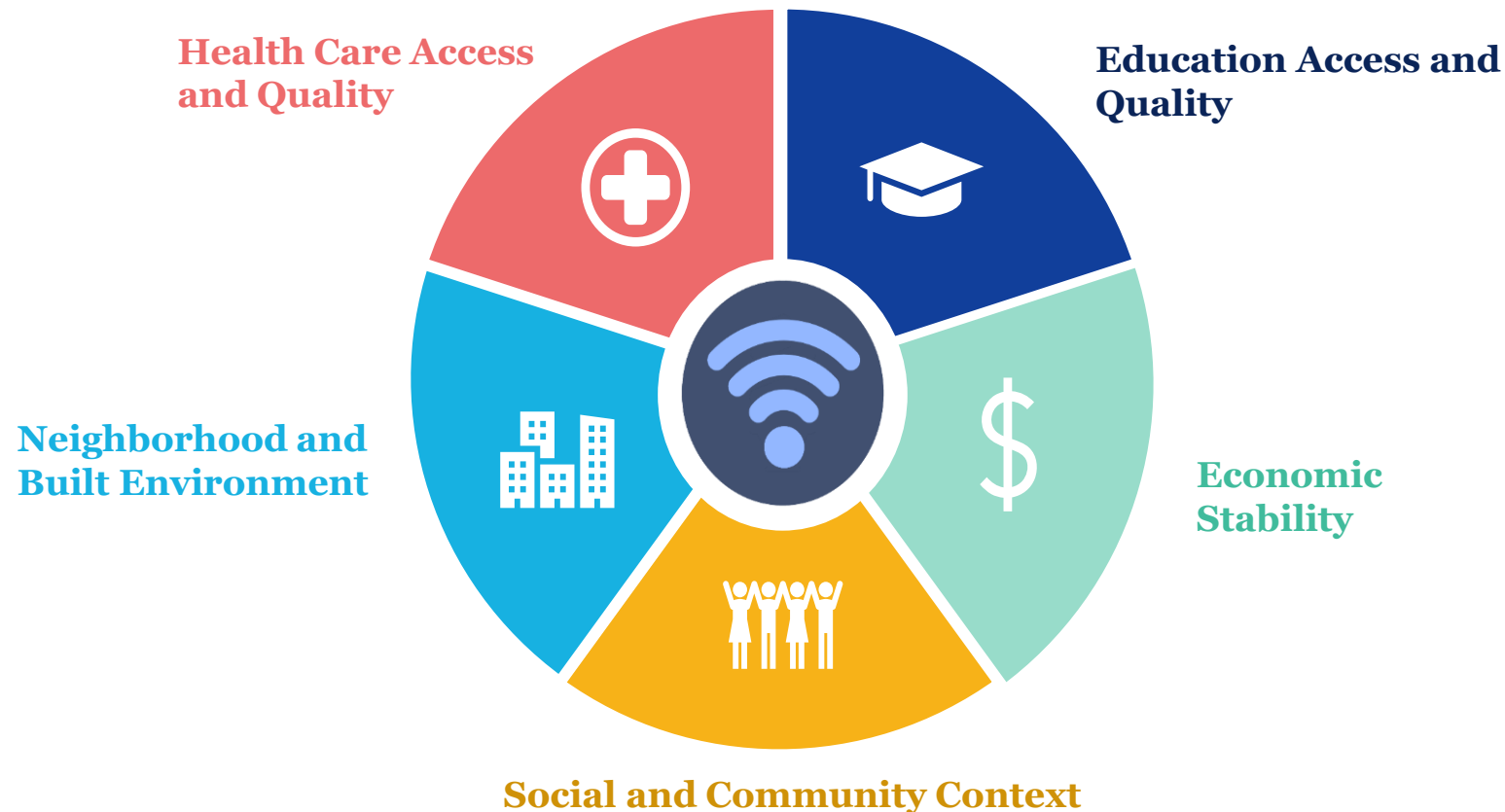


# **Social Determinants of Health**

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**How does the meaningful use of technology improve the following outcomes?**





# Social Determinants of Health: Sample outcomes



## Economic Stability

- Poverty reduction
- Increased employment
- Housing and home affordability
- Food insecurity
- Workplace safety

## Social & Community Context

- Poverty reduction
- Increased employment
- Housing and home affordability
- Food insecurity
- Workplace safety

## Education Access and Quality

- Graduation Rates
- Literacy rates
- Proficiency
- Developmentally ready
- In-school mental healthcare accessibility
- Early childhood education

## Neighborhood and Built Environment

- Environmental health
- Health policy
- Housing and homes
- Injury prevention
- Physical activity
- Accessibility

## Health Care Access & Quality

- Increase community organizations providing prevention services
- Increase family planning services
- Increase proportion of people with a PCP
- Increase adolescent and adult preventative health care, including cancer screening
- Facilitate positive outcomes in prenatal care, dental care, health IT, health communication, etc.



# State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program

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# Purpose of the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program



The purpose of the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program is to **create the conditions where individuals and communities have the information technology capacity** that is needed **for full participation** in the society and economy of the United States<sup>1</sup>.

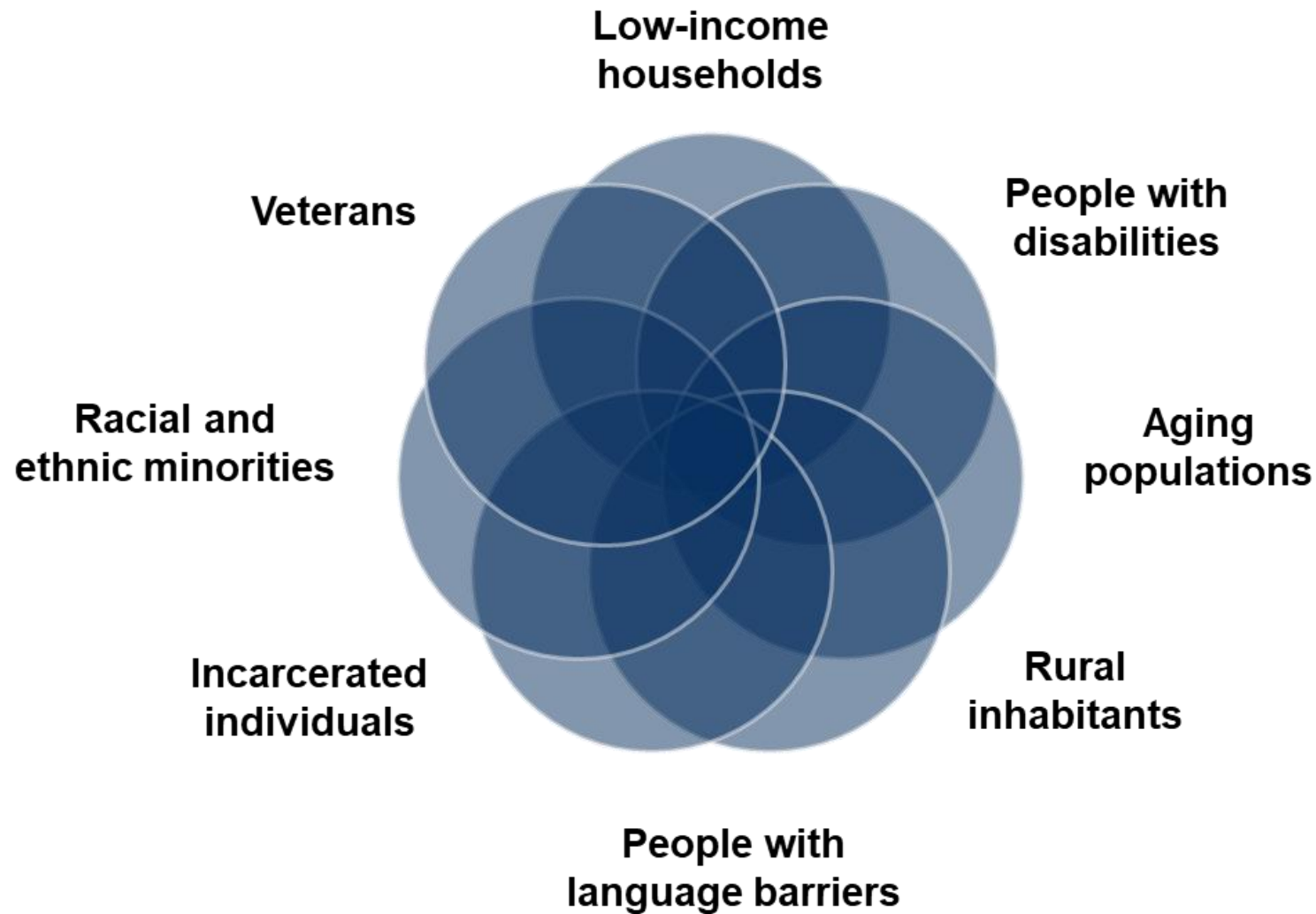
This Program will **make funds available** for States and Territories **to begin implementing their *accepted* State and U.S. Territory Digital Equity Plans** (and related purposes as detailed in the NOFO).

## COVERED POPULATIONS <sup>2</sup>

-  Individuals who live in **covered households** (defined as households with **income of not more than 150% of the poverty level**)
-  **Aging** individuals aged 60 and older
-  **Incarcerated individuals** (as defined by the State or Territory), other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility
-  **Veterans**
-  Individuals with **disabilities**
-  Individuals with a **language barrier**, including individuals who are English learners and have low levels of literacy
-  Individuals who are members of a **racial or ethnic minority group**; and
-  Individuals who primarily reside in a **rural area**



# The intersectionality of Covered Populations: Recognizing individuals may have multiple identities





# Digital inequity disproportionately impacts our stakeholders



## DE & BEAD

### Covered Populations and **Underrepresented Communities** *Identity groups and communities disproportionately impacted by digital inequity*



Low-income households



Indigenous and Native American persons



People with language barriers



Aging individuals



Members of ethnic and religious minorities



Racial and ethnic minorities



Incarcerated individuals



Women



Rural inhabitants



Veterans



LGBTQI+ persons



Persons adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality



Persons of Color



Persons with disabilities



DE NOFO



BEAD NOFO



# Serving Covered Populations



Achieving digital equity is vital to promoting personal welfare and civic engagement of the Covered Populations, focusing on issues like lack of telehealth services, online jobs, etc.

## IMPACTS OF DIGITAL EQUITY:



### **Economic and Workforce Growth**

*Through increased job opportunities and business growth*



### **Educational Expansion**

*By tailoring accessible learning and upskilling opportunities to individual needs and preferences*



### **More Individual Control of Health**

*From improved access to telehealth and increased health literacy*



### **Improved Civic/Social Engagement & Delivery of Essential Services**

*Through increased participation in community events and access to services to improve their quality of life.*



## **COMMITMENT TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, HIGH-SPEED INTERNET**

Recognizing the devastating impact of digital exclusion, President Biden made a **commitment that everyone in America will have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet service.**



# Who Should Apply



Each State and Territory of the United States that has **developed an accepted Digital Equity Plan** is eligible to apply for grants under the Capacity Grant Program.

## Eligible States & Territories

**Grantees that have completed a Digital Equity Plan that meets the requirements of 47 U.S.C. §1723(c) can apply for grants under this Program<sub>1</sub>.**



### Eligible States

- All 50 states and Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico<sub>1</sub>



### One Percent (1%) Territory Set-Aside

- United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands<sub>2</sub>



# **Key Dates and Deadlines**

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# Key Dates to Remember



Application submission and grant award dates for the Capacity Grant Program are described in the NOFO<sub>1</sub>.



## Period of Performance

States and US Territories will be able to spend down grant funds during the **5-year period of performance beginning on the date when the State is awarded grant funds.**



## Application Due Date

***Applications are due by the following dates for...:***

- States, D.C. and Puerto Rico: 60 days after the NOFO is released, **May 28, 2024**
- U.S. Territories: The due date for US Territories' Capacity Grant Applications is **July 31, 2024**
- Native Entities: 315 days after the NOFO is released; the Native Entity application window opens September 25, 2024 and **closes February 7, 2025**



## Issuing Awards

NTIA expects to begin issuing awards to Eligible States on a rolling basis **no later than August 28, 2024.**





## Additional resources about the Digital Equity Programs

- 1 Visit the **InternetForAll.gov** for additional information on federal funding programs and contact information to your State Broadband Office
- 2 Visit <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/> to review your State or Territory digital equity plan.
- 3 Submit questions to **digitalequity@ntia.gov**
- 4 Attend future NTIA webinars, including program-specific application guidance webinars for applicants

**Thank you**

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# **Social Engagement and Assistive Technology Panel**

# Social Engagement and Assistive Technology Panel

- Lori Gerhard, Director of the Office of Interagency Innovation, ACL (Moderator)
- Glenna Wright-Gallo, Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, U.S. Department of Education
- Dawn Merth-Johnson, Education Consultant, Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- Laura Plummer, Statewide Assistive Technology Program Coordinator, Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- Laura Talmus, Executive Director and Co-founder, Beyond Differences

# Wisconsin is Moving Assistive Technology Forward Statewide



**Dawn Merth-Johnson**  
Education Consultant SLP &  
AT

**Financial Disclosure -**  
Employed by the Wisconsin  
Department of Public  
Instruction

**Non-Financial Disclosures—**  
Member of ASHA, WSHA



**Laura E. Plummer**  
Statewide Assistive  
Technology Program  
Coordinator

**Financial Disclosure -**  
Employed by the  
Wisconsin Department  
of Health Services

**Non-Financial Disclosures**  
- None





# IDEA Discretionary Grant - Multi-Agency Partnership



- State agency that advances public education and libraries in WI
- Created in 1848

- One of 12 WI Cooperative Educational Service Agencies
- AT Forward Project

- Wisconsin's AT Act Program
- Statewide AT Lending Library
- Part of the WI Department of Health Services

- Communication Aids and System Clinic (CASC)
- Part of the UW Hospital and Clinics & UW Rehabilitation Dept

**4 Agencies  
One Common Goal**

# Assistive Technology Forward Timeline



# Assistive Technology Forward Components



[AT Forward  
Connections](#)

[Video  
Resource  
Library](#)

[Micro-  
Credentials](#)

[WI Accessible  
Educational  
Materials  
\(AEM\) Center](#)

[AT Devices,  
Services, and  
Resources](#)

[AAC  
Partnership  
Program](#)

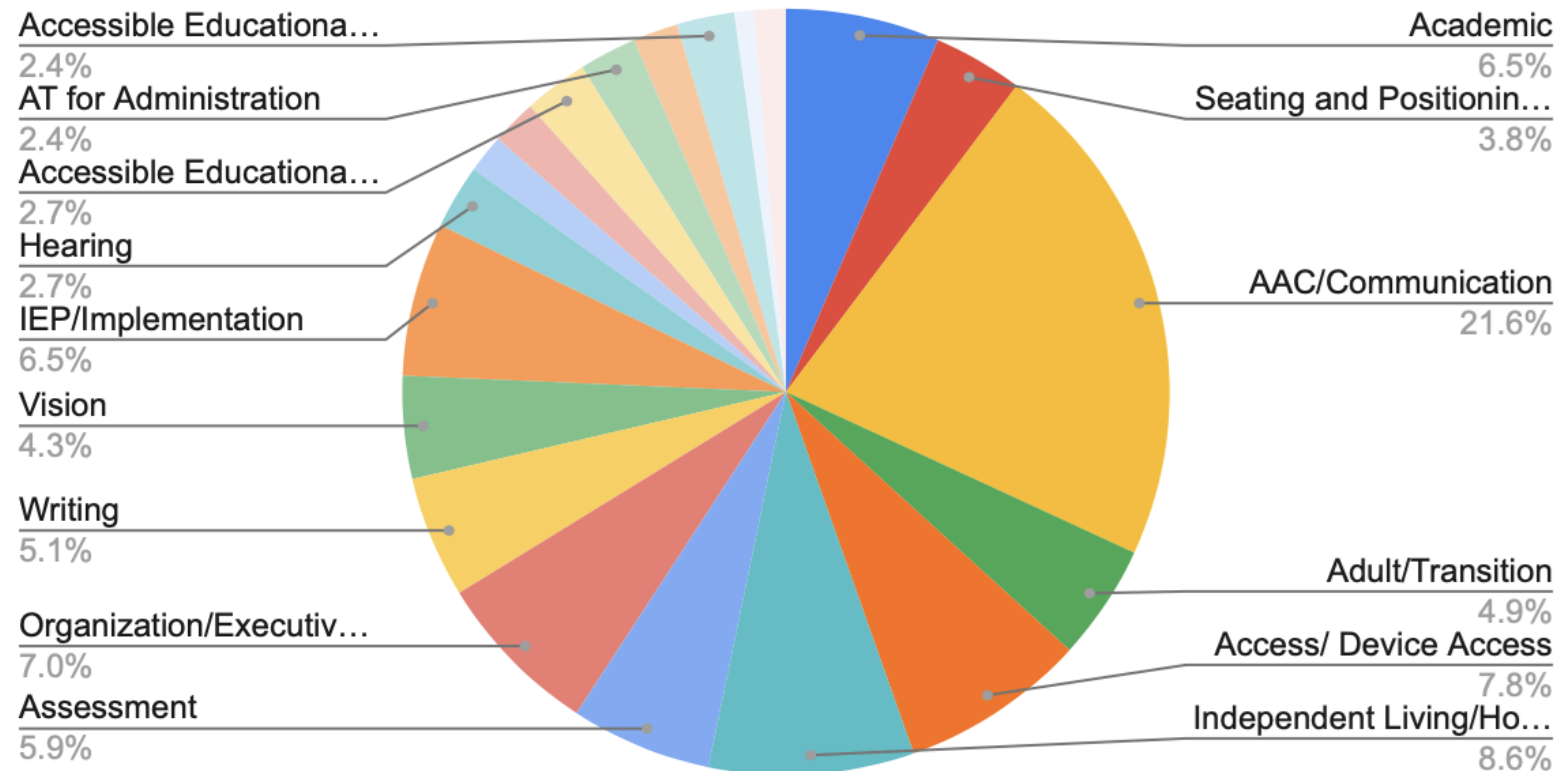
# AT Forward Connections

- Free monthly Community of Practice (CoP) meetings for families, educators, professionals at any AT level
- Monthly email update and resources
- Video resource library
- AT online community

# Micro Credential Program

- Modules can be leveraged anytime, anywhere, for self-paced learning
- Providing professional development to ALL
- 19 content categories available
- Over 374 badges issued to date

Count of Micro-credential Competency Area you are applying for:





# Wisconsin Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Center



## **Resource Development:**

- [AEM Decision Tree](#)
- [Next Steps for Providing AEM](#)
- [Wisconsin AEM Center](#)
- [Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired AEM Center](#)

# AAC Partnership Program

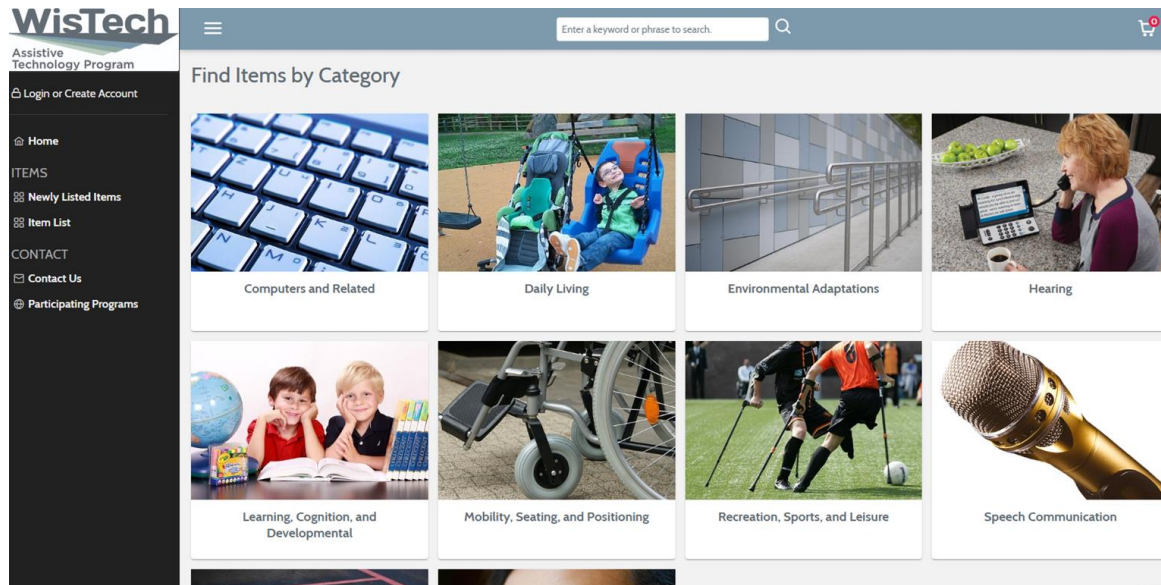
## Goals

- Focus on capacity building for school teams
- Reaching rural communities

## Collaborative team approach

- Approximately a 6-month partnership to include:
  - Feature matching – Focus on students who have been introduced to symbolic communication
  - Virtual coaching
  - ECHO meetings
  - Learning modules

# AT Devices, Services, and Resources

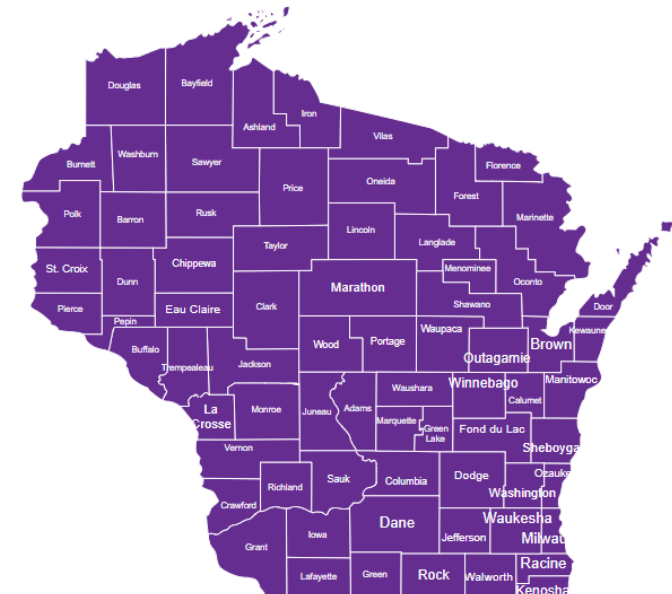


## Integration of statewide AT lending libraries

Wisconsin's Assistive Technology  
Act Program (WisTech DHS)

AT Lending Center (ATLC WI DPI)

- [WisconsinAT4ALL](#)
- [AT Lending Center Resource](#)  
[Ma](#)



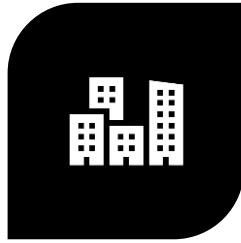
# Understanding the System



**FEDERAL**



**STATE**



**DISTRICT**



**BUILDING**



**EDUCATOR  
STUDENT**

# AT: Process versus Destination



- Access takes collaboration
- Access begins with creating awareness and providing information
- Capacity builds through education, training, and technical assistance
- Acquisition begins with device access through lending libraries and trainings
- AT is an ongoing process



# Advocacy

## **Determine**

- Where AT funding is coming into your state
- How state agencies are investing in AT across your state
- What grant opportunities are available

Identify state, regional, and local AT decision makers and advocates

Bring together a workgroup to discuss how to expand AT connections in your state

Brainstorm goals and dreams of how to improve AT supports in your state

# Cultivate Connections

## **Connect: State education agency**

- State Education Agencies  
Communication Disabilities Council
- **Council for Exceptional Children**

## **Connect: State AT Act Program**

- Assistive Technology Act Programs

**Attend:** Local, State, National AT  
Conferences

## **Post Secondary Connections**

- Teacher Prep Programs
- Assistive Technology Labs

## **Community Connections**

- Public Libraries
- Independent Living Centers (ILC)
- Aging and Disability Resource  
Centers (ADRC)

# BEYOND DIFFERENCES™

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Inspiring Youth to End Social Isolation

# Our Mission

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**BEYOND**  
  
**DIFFERENCES®**

**Our mission is to end social isolation and  
create cultures of belonging in middle  
schools across the country.**



# Our Inspiration

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## In Memory of Lili Rachel Smith

(1994-2009)

Beyond Differences was founded by Laura Talmus and Ace Smith to honor the life and memory of their daughter Lili Rachel Smith. Since 2010, Lili has been the inspiration and guiding light for the accomplishments and growth of Beyond Differences. Her life sparked a national movement that has now touched the lives of millions of children.

# What is Social Isolation?

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At Beyond Differences® we define social isolation as a lack of quality connections with others.

We see this in 3 ways:

- **Physical Social Isolation**
- **Loneliness** – The gap between a desire for connection and what we are actually experiencing.
- **Social Isolation** (not seen) – Being in the same physical space as others, but being alienated, invisible, not seen.



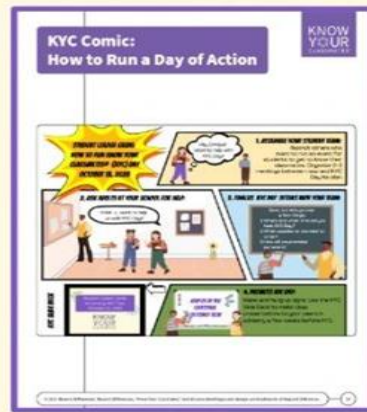


# Programs and Services

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SEL Curriculum



Student Leader Guide



Day of Action Boxes



Day of Action Celebration

KNOW  
YOUR  
CLASSMATES®

NO  
ONE  
EATS ALONE®

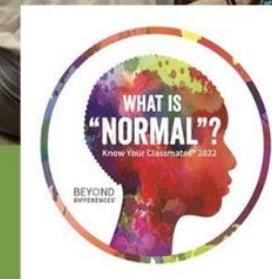
BE KIND  
N  
LINE™

# Student Leadership

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## National Teen Board:

Comprised of high school teens across the country that meet monthly and every summer to develop their leadership and activism skills, our NTB co-designs our curriculum and is regularly featured in our teacher trainings.



# Priority Curriculum Topics

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- ☐ LGBTQIA+ Rights
- ☐ Stopping AAPI Hate
- ☐ Positive Body Image
- ☐ Poverty and Economic Development
- ☐ Centering Immigrant and Refugee Voice
- ☐ Disability Visibility

# By the Numbers and Demographics

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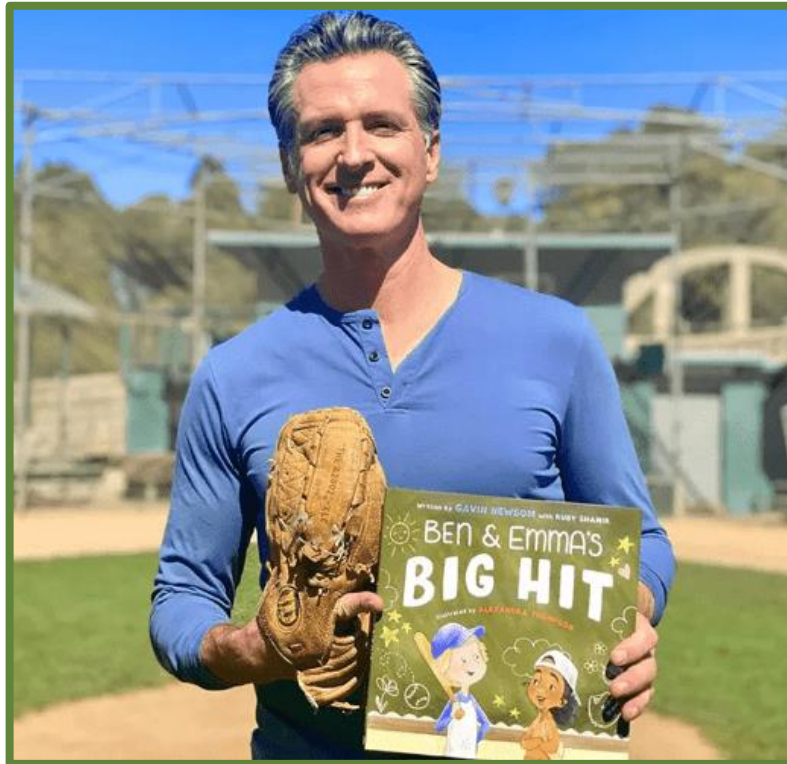
- ❑ Partnering with 10,200 in all 50 states.
- ❑ 64% of our schools are Title 1.
- ❑ Teen Board leaders are majority BIPOC with lived experiences reflected in our curriculum
- ❑ Our Disability Visibility curriculum goal is to serve the 15% of children attending schools with a defined disability to empower classroom norms and school policy



# California Governor Gavin Newsom

## Partners with BD - Know Your Classmates Day 2022

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# Beyond Differences: Disability Visibility

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Everyone, at one point in their lives, will be a part of the disabled community.

Yet so many young people experience social isolation due to growing up disabled or in families with a disabled member.



# MEET THE CREATORS

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Amritha



Emily



Gurnoor



Kuba



Kailee



THESE ACTIVISTS WROTE THIS UNIT BASED ON THEIR OWN LIVES. THEY  
HOPE IT WILL CREATE BELONGING FOR YOUTH LIKE THEM ACROSS THE  
NATION



# Disability Visibility Curriculum Overview

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## **Don't know where to start? Start here!**

We start this unit with the voice of a vibrant young woman named Emily from San Francisco, California. She speaks of her experience with social isolation due to her disability and the ways she found ways to connect and uplift others.

Read Emily - Disability Visibility origin story.

Emily and the Beyond Differences National Teen Board Poverty Disability Team have created this update. By sharing their stories and creating this update, young people have started discussing how they can create a more inclusive culture for disabled students.

## **Why is seeing disability important to belonging?**

The disabled community is the one community that everyone will, at one point, be a part of. Some people are disabled their whole lives, others learn of their disability later in life, and some become disabled in a moment or over time. If we do not allow ourselves to see disability, we deny not just the disabled but the culture of belonging we will all need.

## **What the Members of the Beyond Differences National Teen Board Disability Visibility Team want you to know.**

- Disability includes both physical and mental disability
- Our team is made of both disabled teens and the siblings of the disabled

When disability is not celebrated- shame - blame - withdrawal - stepping away from one's authentic self can result. As a result, many young people felt unable to connect and find belonging in their communities.

## **What is new in this curriculum?**

- A lesson based on National Teen Board Emily's story of growing up isolated by her disability and how she moved forward and found belonging
- A lesson empowering students to create practices to ensure belonging for disabled students and families.
- 4 Belonging Boosters, quick activities focused on Disability Visibility
- **If you are new to this curriculum made by the Disability Visibility, make sure you use not only this update but also all of their offerings here.**

# Accessibility Consultant Erin Robins

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Erin began her career as a special education teacher and quickly realized that, as a person with a disability, she could not continue to participate in a system that did not honor disabled identity but instead labeled students as broken. Erin earned a Master's in Learning and Design from Vanderbilt University and is a Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC) through the International Association for Accessibility Professionals (IAAP). She recently began a new role as the Accessible Design Specialist in the Social Justice Collaborative at a college in Boston. Before that, she designed accessible and identity-affirming curriculum for an ed-tech company.

# Accessibility Guidelines

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## Layout of the guidelines:

These guidelines are divided into three categories: **Requirements, Requests, and Recommendations.**

Each guideline is then further subdivided into **Design Guidelines** and **Facilitation Guidelines.**

Beyond Differences is committed to supporting guest speakers, presenters, and facilitators in our accessibility efforts. For the practical applications of this, please read [Beyond Differences Accessibility Responsibilities.](#)



# Thank You

[beyonddifferences.org](http://beyonddifferences.org)

U.S. Department of Education

# **RAISE THE BAR FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**





# RAISE THE BAR: LEAD THE WORLD

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## ACHIEVE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- Accelerate learning for every student
- Deliver a comprehensive and rigorous education for every student

## BOLDLY IMPROVE LEARNING CONDITIONS

- Eliminate the educator shortage for every school
- Invest in every student's mental health and well being

## CREATE PATHWAYS FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

- Ensure every student has a pathway to college and a career
- Provide every student with a pathway to multilingualism

# OUR USERS MISSION & PRIORITIES

**TO IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD, EDUCATION, AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES  
AND RAISE EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, THEIR  
FAMILIES, THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND THE NATION**

## LEADING FOR EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

### **PREPARED WORKFORCE**

Remedy immediate staffing shortages and effectively deploy diverse and equipped educators, providers, and support personnel

### **EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES**

Amplify, promote, and actively drive effective learning experiences, instruction, intervention, services, and support

### **ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY**

Accelerate usage of inclusive materials and technology for in-person and remote learning and employment

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Engage families, individuals with disabilities, educators, providers, policy makers, advocates, and communities to identify successes, barriers, and needs

### **STRATEGIC RESOURCES**

Invest in data-aligned coordinated activities that advance Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)

# Wrap Up and Next Day Preview

- Meredith Hanley, Director of Community Capacity Building, USAging
- Katie Clark, Policy Analyst, Office of Interagency Innovation, ACL

# Join Us Tomorrow

- Program Spotlight: Machine Learning and the Social Health Connector Tool
- Virtual Programming Panel
- Call to Action and Wrap Up

# Thank you for participating in the Virtual Summit!