



# ADVANCING DIGITAL EQUITY

A systems approach to address the digital divide in Essex County



## ADVANCING DIGITAL EQUITY VISION

All residents of Essex County will have equitable access to the internet, an affordable computing device and the digital literacy to use them effectively.



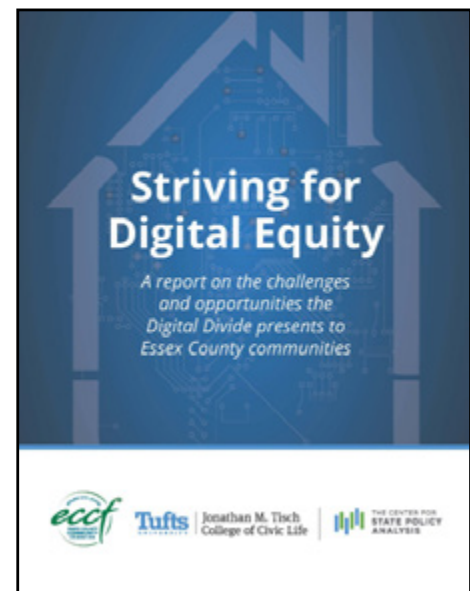
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For generations, economic and race inequities have existed for hundreds of thousands of Essex County residents. Over the last 12 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has particularly and profoundly exposed the breadth and depth of the digital divide in our region.

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## THE STUDY

As an essential step towards addressing these inequities, ECCF partnered with the Center for State Policy Analysis at Tisch College, Tufts University in October 2019 to produce a baseline analysis of how the digital divide impacts each of Essex County's 34 cities and towns.



[Read the full report at eccf.org.](http://eccf.org)

# THE NEED FOR DIGITAL EQUITY



One of every five Essex County families lacks a basic computer.



Latino residents are twice as likely as white residents to lack broadband access.



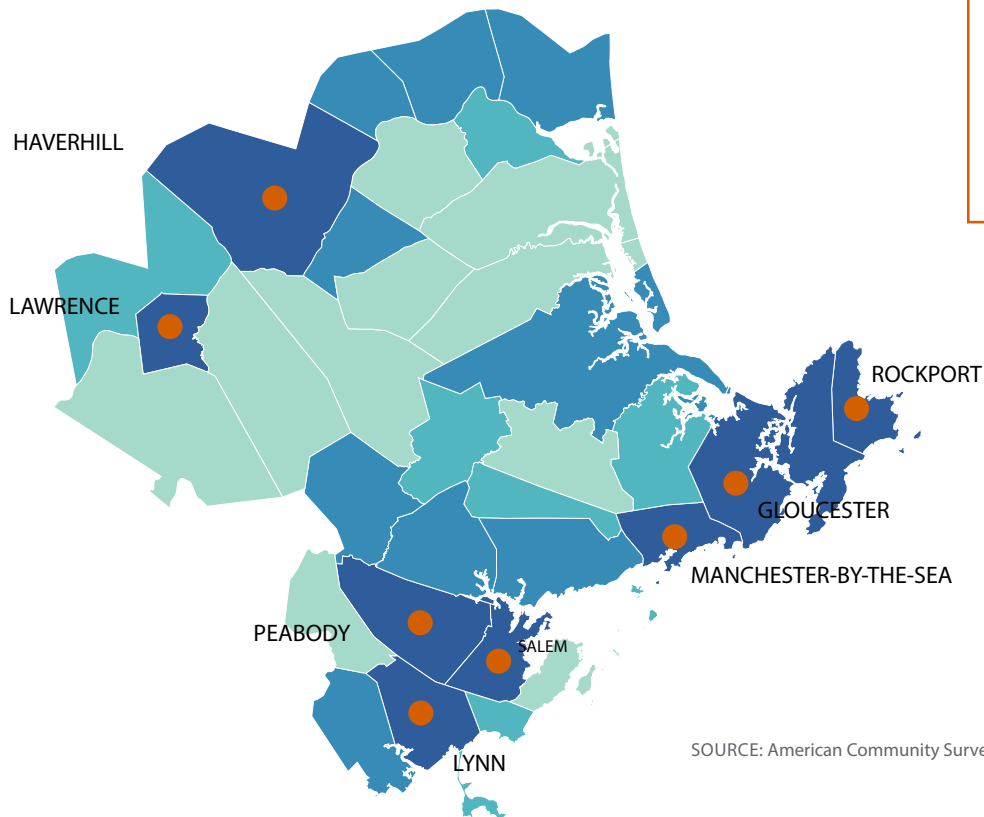
Nearly 60,000 households and 160,000 people live without fixed broadband.



Economically disadvantaged cities fare worse overall, but the digital divide impacts all communities.

Across Essex County, nearly 60,000 households lack secure broadband.

Share of households with cable or fiber optic broadband.



9 of the 10 neighborhoods with the lowest rates of broadband access and computer ownership are in Lawrence and Lynn.



SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2014-2018

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# ADDRESSING THE BARRIERS

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Digital equity is a multi-dimensional issue consisting of four primary barriers - **Access, Equipment, Digital Literacy and Privacy** - as identified in ECCF's [Striving for Digital Equity report](#). Our work will focus on strategic interventions that address each of these barriers and support immediate and long-term technology needs for Essex County's most vulnerable residents and economically disadvantaged communities.



## BROADBAND ACCESS

Expand (free or subsidized) wifi or broadband internet access factoring in affordability and availability.



## PRIVACY

Ensure comfortable working and learning spaces and provide appropriate tools to enable a sense of privacy for digital users.



## EQUIPMENT

Equip vulnerable residents with the necessary (free or subsidized) equipment and tools by working with community partners.



## DIGITAL LITERACY

Amplify regional programming to enhance the ability for residents to find, evaluate, utilize, share and interact effectively with information technologies.

# OUR GOAL and COMMITMENT

**\$2.5M** | **MULTI-YEAR  
INVESTMENT**

To **EMPOWER** thousands of Essex  
County residents with the  
**ACCESS, TOOLS AND LEARNING**  
to fully participate in the digital world,  
**INCREASING THE QUALITY OF LIFE**  
for themselves, their families and  
their businesses.

## SYSTEMS PHILANTHROPY

To advance digital equity in Essex County, ECCF will employ its Systems Philanthropy approach to bring about lasting social change. This systems-based approach:

- begins with community engagement.
- identifies root causes.
- inspires collaboration and collective action.
- invests larger resources over a longer period of time.
- engages funders as strategic partners.



[Learn more about ECCF's Systems Philanthropy approach at eccf.org.](https://www.eccf.org)

# INVESTMENT AREAS

ECCF's multi-year, \$2.5 million commitment to advancing digital equity will empower all residents with the access, literacy, devices and support necessary to successfully navigate our increasingly digital world.



## ACCESS

Increasing available opportunities for affordable, quality Wifi or broadband internet service.

**Goal: connect 15,000 residents with free or affordable access**



## LITERACY

Amplifying digital literacy programming designed to train residents to operate digital devices and successfully navigate the internet.

**Goal: train 1,000 individuals to confidently use a computer**



## DEVICES

Working collaboratively with community partners to equip residents with the hardware necessary to connect to and utilize the internet.

**Goal: provide 5,000 residents with reliable devices**



## ECOSYSTEM OF SUPPORT

Uniting cross-sector leaders in a coalition to generate ideas, form partnerships and share information to find sustainable solutions to our region's digital inequities.

**Goal: engage 100+ partners as a countywide network of support**

Learn more.

Visit [eccf.org/digital-equity](https://eccf.org/digital-equity) to learn more and see the latest news.

# OUR VISION FOR CHANGE

## IMAGINE A TIME WHEN:

- students can achieve better educational outcomes.
- people can connect with their health care providers for vital services.
- seniors have the knowledge to deepen their connections with family and friends.
- adults can get and keep better jobs.
- small businesses can compete in the marketplace.

We believe **NOW** is the time to bridge the digital divide in Essex County by investing in real solutions that make short-term strides as we build a learning coalition and ecosystem to ensure ongoing innovation and resiliency.

Addressing this singular challenge will have rippling effects in so many other areas of need. Through partnership, we can each play an important role in this effort and improve the quality of life here in Essex County.

## TANGIBLE 3-YEAR IMPACT:

By working collaboratively with our communities to empower thousands of Essex County residents with the access, tools and learning to fully participate in the digital world, we aim to achieve:

### IMPACT ON PEOPLE:

- 10,000 households and businesses are connected with free or affordable **ACCESS** to the internet
- 5,000 people have reliable **DEVICES** to connect to the digital world
- 1,000 people and businesses can successfully use their devices to **NAVIGATE** the internet

### IMPACT ON THE ECOSYSTEM:

- 100+ for-profit, nonprofit and government partners will work together to deliver digital solutions that improve the lives of people across the county
- A strong ecosystem is in place to tackle identified systems solutions that improve digital equity to Essex County for the long term

# JOIN US.

Join us in empowering thousands of Essex County residents with the access, tools and learning to fully participate in the digital world.

Here is how you can help:

- **Become a Donor:**  
You can contribute to ECCF's Digital Equity Fund to help us achieve the strategies and goals outlined in this initiative. Make a multi-year pledge to support this work by contacting Stacey Landry at [s.landry@eccf.org](mailto:s.landry@eccf.org) (978.777.8876).
- **Advocate for Digital Equity:**  
To be successful in achieving systemic change, it requires advocating with our public officials, neighbors, family and friends. Share the Bringing Digital Equity Report with those in your network. Sign up for ECCF's newsletters to stay connected and hear about ways you can advocate in your community.
- **Connect with ECCF:**  
Sign up for ECCF's Digital Equity newsletter and other ECCF communications by visiting our website - [www.eccf.org](http://www.eccf.org).

→ Learn more at [eccf.org/digital-divide](http://eccf.org/digital-divide).



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