



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND
JB Pritzker, Governor

DIGITAL NAVIGATORS

As part of his historic \$45 billion Rebuild Illinois investment strategy, Governor J.B. Pritzker included \$420 million to expand access to high-speed broadband internet across the state. The resulting *Connect Illinois Broadband Grant Program* is the largest state-based broadband matching grant program ever, leveraging the magnitude of funding needed for state-driven broadband ubiquity.

To help Illinoisans best access, adopt, and use broadband, the Illinois Office of Broadband introduced complementary programming to pair with its ongoing \$420 million capital broadband investment. Combined, this funding seeks to ensure affordable in-home broadband service, access to personal computers, digital literacy training, and ongoing technical support. Illinois is working alongside public and private partners through this initiative to drive economic development and increase quality of life for all Illinoisans.

The ***Digital Navigator Grant Program*** promotes digital equity and inclusion by supporting new or improved “Digital Navigator” capacity at the community level. The program is part of the increasingly robust and comprehensive Connect Illinois Digital Equity Package, a holistic approach designed to help communities identify and address existing broadband equity gaps, as well as to leverage new resources for urgent broadband access and longer-term broadband competitiveness – with an eye to sustained broadband equity and inclusion.

Digital Navigators serve as the critical community “expert” to provide assistance for local residents needing improved digital literacy skills and know-how. Digital Navigators work with community organizations and residents directly to address the full digital inclusion process – ranging from at-home broadband connectivity to computer use to digital skills. Working with the Illinois Office of Broadband and program partners through a train-the-trainer model, Digital Navigators assess community digital literacy gaps and provide competent guidance towards resources and program development that is suitable for the community and its residents.

Digital Navigators can be volunteers or cross-trained staff who already work in social service agencies, libraries, health, and more who offer remote and socially distant in-person guidance. Digital Navigators will have support from the Illinois Office of Broadband and program partners through targeted training; local, regional, and statewide digital inclusion resources; and introduction to the full Illinois Digital Navigator peer community network. Digital Navigator communities will have an opportunity for continued training, ongoing consultation with the peer network, and additional support and resources.

The Digital Navigator program launched in 2021. For more information on the Illinois Connected Communities program, [visit the Illinois Office of Broadband Connect Illinois website](#).

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