Uptake and Impact of Digital Inclusion Programs

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Digital Inclusion Research Forum
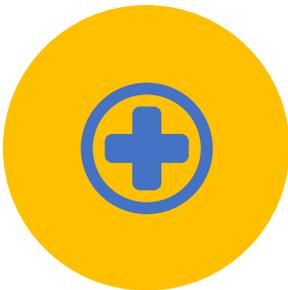
Dallas, TX

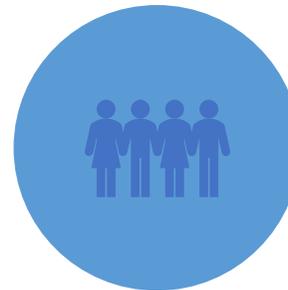October 12th, 2023

Importance of Broadband

Supporting education

Stimulating economic growth

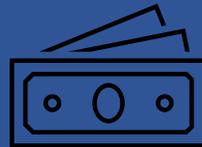Lowering costs and barriers to healthcare

Strengthening social ties

Digital Divide

The **gap** between those that have affordable and reliable access to high-speed internet as well as the skills and support to effectively engage online and those who do not.
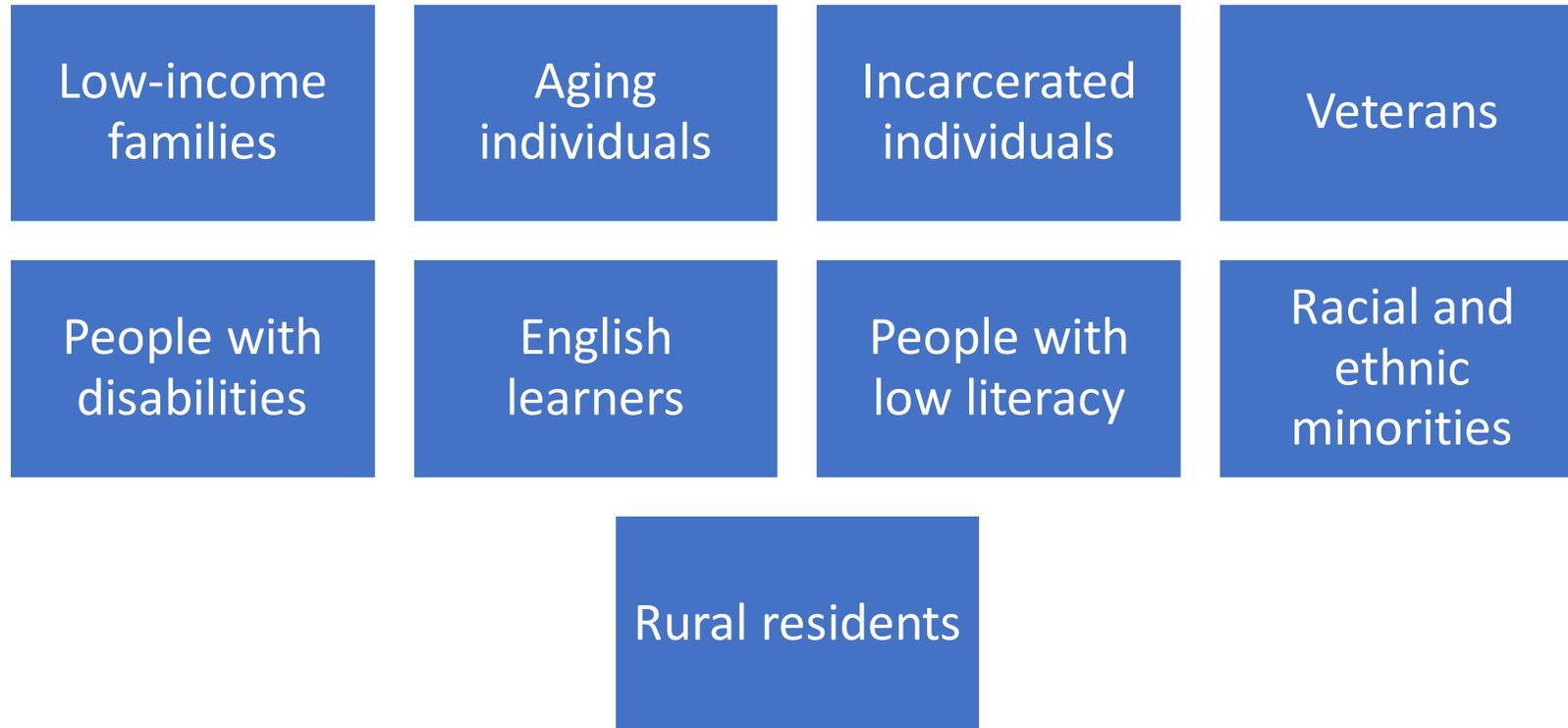
Availability

Affordability

Adoption

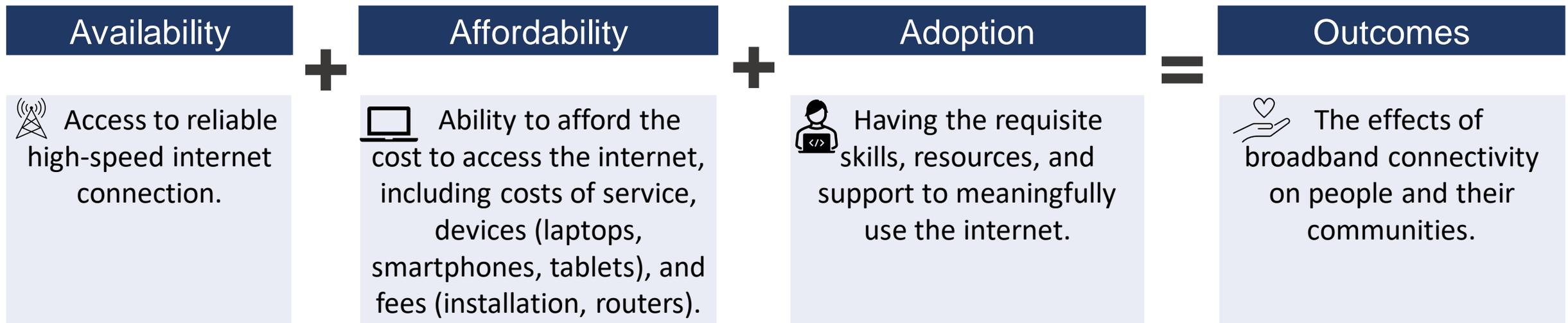Digital skills

Perceived relevance

Covered Populations

Low-income families

Aging individuals

Incarcerated individuals

Veterans

People with disabilities

English learners

People with low literacy

Racial and ethnic minorities

Rural residents

Digital Equity "Equation"

Availability		Affordability		Adoption		Outcomes
Access to reliable high-speed internet connection.	**+**	Ability to afford the cost to access the internet, including costs of service, devices (laptops, smartphones, tablets), and fees (installation, routers).	**+**	Having the requisite skills, resources, and support to meaningfully use the internet.	**=**	The effects of broadband connectivity on people and their communities.

To achieve digital equity, we need initiatives that address availability, affordability, and adoption barriers with a clear goal to improve the everyday lives of the recipients.

Digital Inclusion Programs

Government

Federal: *Affordable Connectivity Program*

State: *Alabama Broadband Connectivity Program*

Municipal: *Chicago Connected*

Private companies

Comcast's Internet Essentials

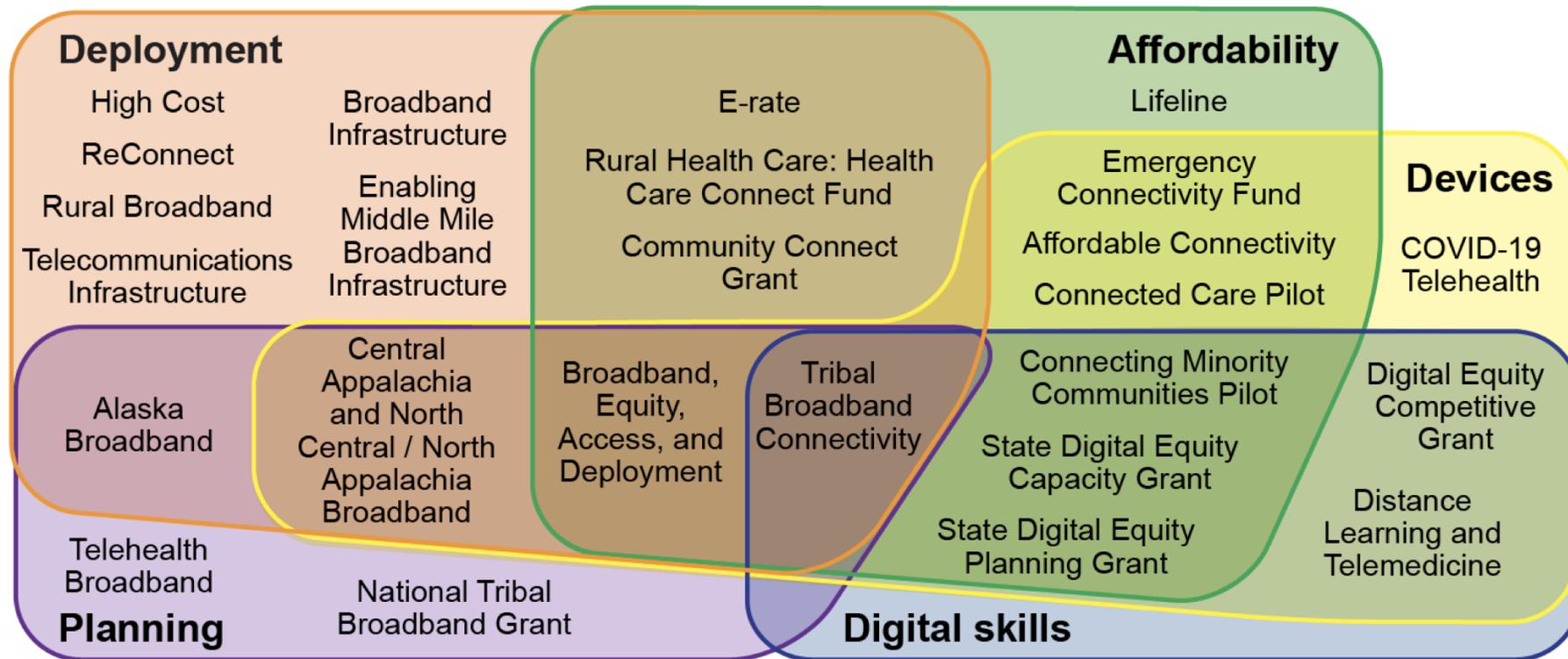*Spectrum's Internet Assist*

Nonprofits

Basic computer skills, digital literacy training, hotspots loaner programs by libraries, community centers, senior centers, etc.
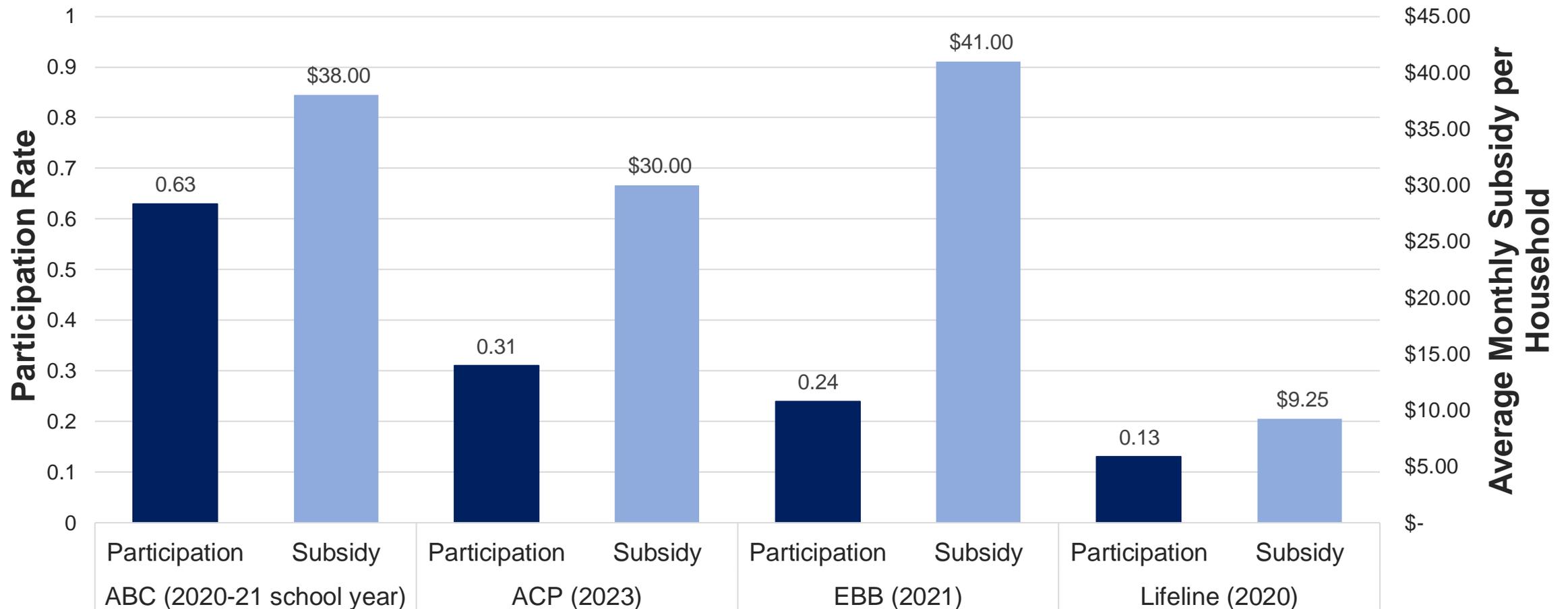
Federal Digital Inclusion Programs

The Mosaic of 25 Federal Programs with Broadband as a Main Purpose, as of November 2021, by Purpose Category

Source: GAO analysis. | GAO-22-104611

Broadband: National Strategy Needed to Guide Federal Efforts to Reduce Digital Divide

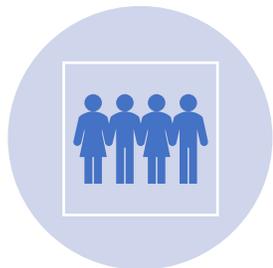# (Mostly) Low Uptake in Digital Inclusion Programs

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Designing Effective Digital Inclusion Programs

Build coalitions with anchor institutions

Intentional outreach in the right language, culture, and with trusted community leaders
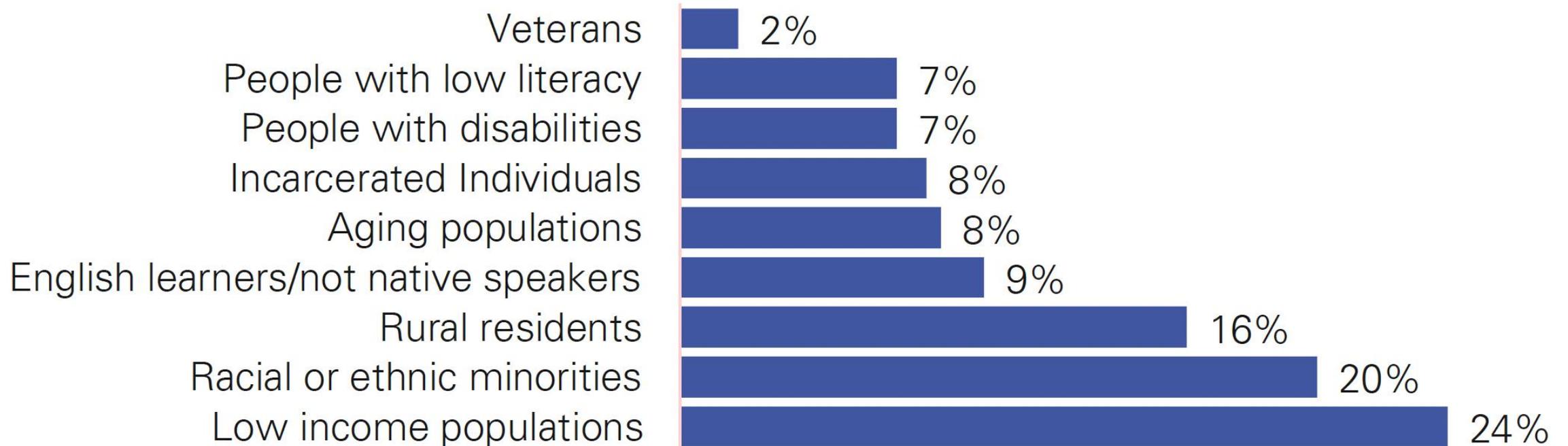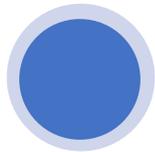
Design to meet the community's needs

Communicate measurable impact

Percentage of digital literacy training literature addressing covered populations
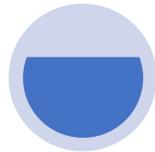

Digital Literacy and Equity: A Synthesis of Findings for Covered Populations

Gaps – Evaluating Program Success

Outputs

Direct products such as total recipients, hours of training completed, subsidized devices, subsidized connections.

Outcomes

Short- and medium-term effects such as increased confidence in digital skills, job placement, increased internet use, including telehealth.

Impacts

Long-term effects such as economic development, improved overall health, and reduced recidivism rates.

Acknowledgement

Part of this work was conducted in partnership with the Friday Institute at North Carolina State University.

Thank you. Connect with me to follow my work.