

Digital Equity Coalition

Q1 – March 10, 2026

Using Coalition Feedback to shape Year 2



Arlington is Highly Connected, but Adoption Gaps Remain

Connectivity Snapshot

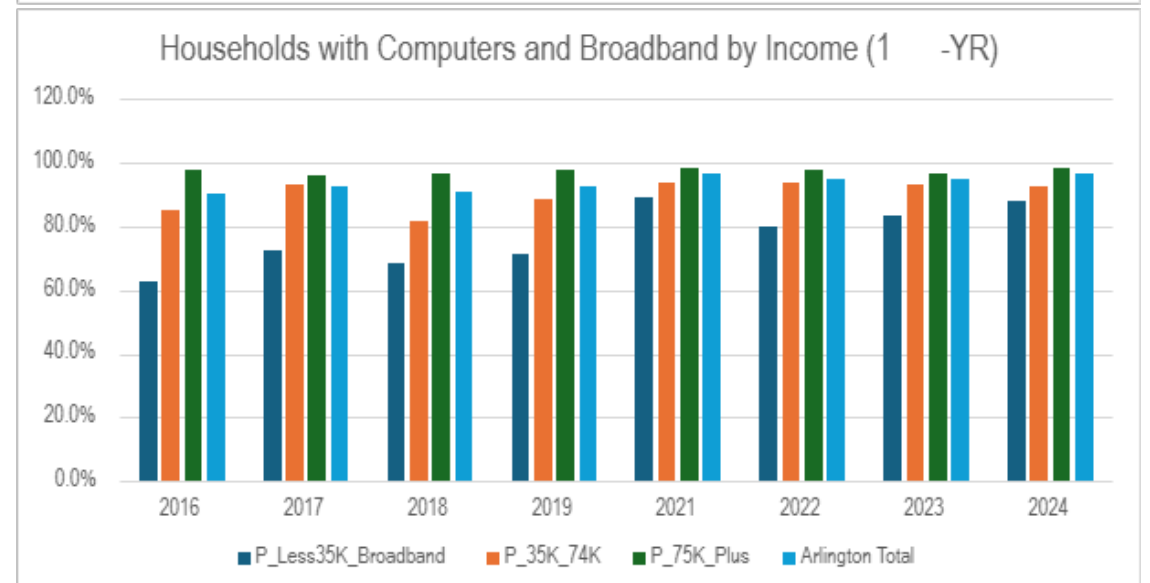
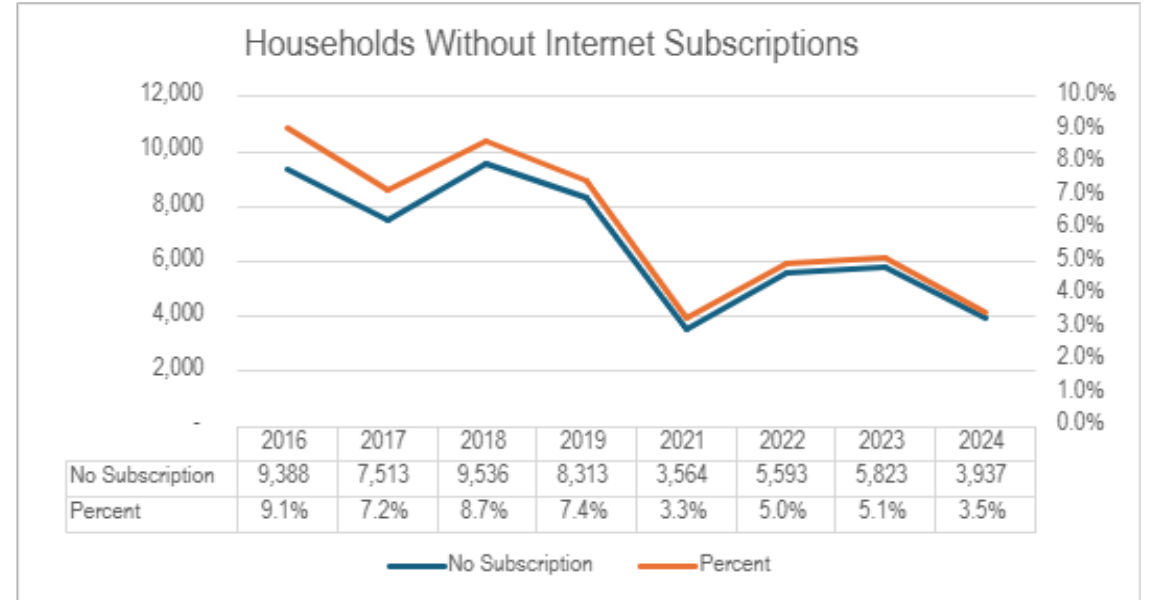
- 99% broadband availability
- 95% choice of 2+ providers
- But adoption gaps remain

Where Gaps Appear

- 3,937 households lack internet subscriptions
- 991 households lack a computer
- 4,484 rely on smartphones only

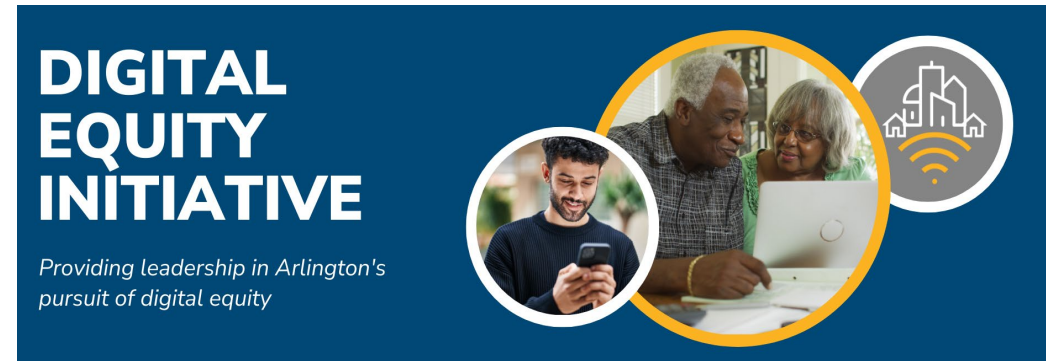
Who is Most Affected?

- Lower-income, older adults, people with disabilities, people of color
- Disparities declining over time



Digital Equity Initiative Launched in Fall 2024

- Housed in the **Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development**
- **Funded with proceeds from a real estate transaction** in exchange for access to the County-owned fiber-optic network system in National Landing
- **\$2.8 million earmarked** by the County Board to advance digital equity initiatives



Empower all Arlington residents to have the tools and knowledge needed to participate in today's tech-driven world through strategic planning and coordination.

Year 1 Highlights and Accomplishments

Designated as a national leader in digital inclusion work: 2024-2025



Launched the Digital Equity Coalition



Awarded \$500,000 in grants to support 1,600+ residents



Opportunities for skill building



Digital equity and affordable housing






Year 1 Built a Strong Foundation for Collaboration

- 70+ Participants, ~ 50 Organizations
- 5 Meetings in 2025; Attendance grew from 25 → 45
- Participation from Nonprofit, County, Schools, ISPs, private partners
- 1 Train-the-Trainer Session
- 15 presentations
- Resource Directory Published

After Year 1, What are Coalition Members Experiencing?





Value: What Members are Gaining

Resource Awareness

Better understanding of programs and services across Arlington.

Strong Network Building and Cross-Sector Collaboration


New partnerships across nonprofits, County, and private sector

Shared Learning

Presentations and peer discussions surfaced practical ideas, awareness of grants, and innovative approaches that organizations can adapt for their own clients/work.

Tangible outcomes

Connections led to program expansion and more effective service delivery.



Evolution: From Strong Foundation to Greater Impact

Formalize the Knowledge Hub

Create a structured, centralized hub for shared resources, partnership opportunities, and public-facing information (including events and outreach).

Clearer Roles and Capacity


Increase visibility into member programs and capacity through short pitches, profiles, and roundtables to uncover synergies and reduce gaps.

Align and Coordinate for Strategic Action

Facilitate intentional matchmaking, joint grant efforts, corporate engagement/resources, and coordinated service delivery to reduce duplication.

Expand Pathways to Economic Mobility

Build stronger workforce training, certifications, employer certifications, and inclusive programming (including ESL and disability communities).



Leadership: Affirming the Model, Strengthening the Edges

Strong Support for Current Staff-Led Model


Consistent leadership helps ensure progress, coordination, and follow-through, particularly given limited capacity, demands, and focused nature of members in their respective line of work.

Be Mindful of Grassroots Concerns

Carefully balance the need to make progress fostering organizational ownership and buy-in while thoughtfully managing the associated complexity and meeting burden. Some members prefer grassroots approach and have willingness to assist with logistics and planning.

Use working groups strategically

A small advisory/work group could coalesce around specific priorities with an emphasis on purposes-driven over permanent committees. Desire for stronger connections and structured collaboration time within meetings.



Opportunities to Strengthen Connection

Create a Shared Information Hub

A central platform could increase visibility of opportunities and cross-member coordination, including resources sharing, upcoming events, partnership opportunities, or post needs or collaboration requests.

Ensure Communication Rhythm

Continue to share agendas in advance, provide short follow-up notes with key decisions/actions, and regular email/eNewsletter updates.

Increase Accessibility and Participation

While most appreciate in-person, consider hybrid meeting options. Poll members on meeting timing and use breakout groups for deeper engagement.

**Does this reflect your
experience / view?**



Small Group Discussion: Shaping what's next



Initiative's Draft 2026 Priorities

1. Prioritize high-need census tracts and populations in funding decisions,
2. Continue to support and encourage County departments to integrate digital inclusion programming and outreach into their work,
3. Build capacity among community-based partners,
4. Host a community showcase highlighting resources for residents and community partners,
5. Formalize a Digital Equity Knowledge Hub for Coalition members,
6. Enhance Coalition meetings to optimize relationship building and action,
7. Explore device disposal alternatives to promote device refurbishment for digital inclusion organizations, and
8. Identify digitally ready building standards to continue to drive quality, affordable broadband in development and property management practices.

Based on the priorities identified in the Annual Report and the feedback shared today, where should the Coalition focus next:

Focus the Coalition's Energy

What one or two priorities feel most important for the Coalition to focus on over the next year?

Identify Learning Needs

Which topics would you like to see discussed at future Coalition meetings?

What types of presenters or skill-building activities would be most valuable?

Surface Actionable Shared Projects

What are two to three tangible projects this group could advance together?

Clarify Roles

What contributions could your organization offer? (expertise, outreach, space, staff time, data, etc)

What contributions from others will be needed to accomplish these projects?

Summary of Small Group Work

The group affirmed the full suite of Draft Initiative Priorities with particular emphasis on these areas:

- **Creating a central hub for communications, including creating a directory for Coalition members**
- **Exploring device distribution alternatives, including assistive technology**
- **Organizing a community showcase; consider existing events to leverage marketing (or hosting), and use the showcase to lead people to services**
- Continuing to target high-need areas and populations (e.g., undocumented, older adults, persons with disabilities) and promote pathways to economic mobility (e.g., IT certifications)
- **AI, online safety/data privacy, and digital citizenship emerged as areas to promote via the Initiative/Coalition and reinforce values of County within**
- Promoting capacity for community-based partners, given the many partners already doing this work
- Identify digital standards to ensure quality broadband
- Given prevalence of mobile/tablet, ensure inclusive design for online content for these devices

For Coalition meetings, discussion focused around:

- **Organizing meetings around a central theme; meetings currently have too many themes in one. Particular themes of interest include: funding, teaching methodologies for various populations/topics**
- Continuing to promote/leverage other private sector organizations who can bring in other resources
- **Promote relationship-building with showcase of each other's work, short pitches, and speed dating exercises, and consider name tags in meetings**

Possible tangible group projects:

- **Organize the community showcase** (most tangible)
- Create a visual representation of the pathway of offerings by Coalition members for the public starting with basic skills moving toward more advanced skills and possible employment
- Build a visual of what impact programs and investments have been done in targeted areas/populations
- Better identify how/when the Initiative/Coalition should support other County Departments

***Bold** denotes 3+ groups discussed the topic.*