

**Essential Services Outcome Area Working Group Meeting Transcript
February 16, 2023**

All right. Well, good afternoon and welcome to our first outcome area working group meeting for the essential services, accessibility, and civic engagement. A few housekeeping items before we begin: as you have already noticed, we are recording this meeting, and it will be uploaded on our Broadband Portal under past events. And next slide, please. Okay, our ASL interpreters are spotlight along the speakers. So if you would like them on top of your screen, please choose the side-by-side speaker view. Later on, in the agenda there will be portions where we open the mic, the floor up to folks to participate in which you can change your view to side by side gallery, and our interpreters will still be top of the screen. Our closed captioning is available for you to select, um, using the toolbar towards the...toolbar towards the bottom of the screen, and then we invite everyone to introduce yourselves if you haven't already in the chat. Please share your names, pronouns, organization, title, and, if possible, where you're joining us from. And if there's any questions our staff will record, and we'll try to address them in the order that it's listed. And lastly, please use your raise hand features in portions where we're asking you to speak. What it does is bring you up on my screen, so I can see that you need to speak, and then I'll unmute you, and that we can spotlight you. So with all that said next slide, please. So here's our agenda for the day, um, we will start with an introduction to the State digital equity planning process and then continue with the discussion on the definition of digital equity, why it is important. We invited a couple of our guest speakers to comment on this, and how it's reflected in their organization. Next we will go to the community and lived experiences portion where we hope it will be a bi-directional, multi-directional conversation between our group here and then pivoting to calls to action, and next steps, and closing. So with that I would like to introduce Scott Adams, our CDT Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy Deputy Director to lead our discussion on SDEP. Scott. Thank you so much, Anh. It's a pleasure to be here, and I want to welcome everyone who took time out of your busy days to, to be here and participate in this, you know, inaugural working group on essential services, civic participation and accessibility is part of the digital equity planning process. As Anh had said, my name is Scott Adams, I'm the deputy director of broadband and digital literacy at the California Department of Technology, and our office really plays a central role in coordinating the State's broadband for all program, and its related initiatives that are designed to close California's digital divide and foster digital equity throughout the State. Next slide, please. So we mentioned at the outset, we want to make sure that we place both the digital equity planning process, and this working group in the context of Broadband for All which I had mentioned. And so, Broadband for All is the State and Governor Gavin Newsom's overarching program to close the digital divide. Really, it's based on the acknowledgment that access to infrastructure and service, affordability of service and adoption are critical components of digital equity as are digital literacy and inclusion. Those are really outputs of where we're going with this. Next slide, please. So as we look at Broadband for All, and we're coming from a state perspective, we wanted to make sure that we shared the evolution of the State's kind-of multi-agency collaboration to work on Broadband for All, and that really begins with in 2010 something unique to California was the establishment of the California Broadband Council, which includes 9 State agencies, the Department of Technology, the Public Utilities Commission, the Office of

Emergency Services, the California Transportation Agency, etc., and one non-state agency, the California Emerging Technology Fund. Additional members of the California Broadband Council are a representation of the State Senate and Assembly. And so, really the work of the Broadband Council was to coordinate the deployment of broadband and broadband adoption efforts in the State in unserved communities as designated by the California Public Utilities Commission. You'll see in this logic model as it goes downward, that in 2020 at the heart of the COVID pandemic Governor Newsom issued his broadband executive order, which directed the California Broadband Council and other entities to refocus our efforts on closing the State's digital divide, and really directed the Broadband Council to put together a statewide broadband action plan. That effort also was completed in 2020. It was created over a 4 month period, with, you know, collaboration input from over 700 entities and created a road map for how the State could close its digital divide. The next crucial piece that of the puzzle was in 2021, when both the Legislature and Governor Newsom passed Senate Bill 156 was historic legislation that really addressed some of the infrastructure needs that were called out in the action plan and allocated 6 billion dollars to fund both the State's Middle Mile broadband initiative and related last-mile programs to support that. A little bit about those, 3.25 billion was allocated to the Department of Technology to oversee the development of the State's open-access Middle Mile Network to help offset some of the costs for incumbent providers and other entities to deploy service out to unserved communities. That is, you know, in partnership with that our Golden State Net, who is the State's third party administrator and Caltrans is a critical partner that is managing the construction of the constructed segments of that. The last mile programs, really, 2 billion dollars were allocated to the Public Utilities Commission to add to their existing programs last mile grants that would be available to Internet service providers and other eligible entities to leverage those grants and build local last mile network solutions that would tie back to the middle mile and help address the access and connectivity needs. I think lastly, here I want to draw your attention to the line at the bottom, where you know, through the bipartisan legislation in Washington, the Investment Infrastructure and Jobs Act contains 65 billion dollars, in additional funding for broadband to support states and local entities to really pursue broadband deployment and adoption efforts in their States. And our focus here today is going to be on the Digital Equity Act programs. And another key piece of legislation that we want to call out is that at the end of last year's legislative session, Assembly Bill 2750, directed the Department of Technology to seek federal funding to develop a State Digital Equity Plan which we are at the beginning of that process now, with you all as partners. So next slide, please. A bit about the digital equity planning process. This...we're at the relative beginning of that process. So we're, we're just getting started. We don't have all the answers. And really that's why we've extended this group to include you all as subject matter experts, and with, with local and specific knowledge in developing the plan. We've developed a process that had multiple touch points for engagement with a number of partners, and the first is, we've established a statewide planning group that consists of broadband council member entities, and 12 other State agencies that have a connection to the covered populations that we are seeking to empower and other subject matter expertise. Those statewide planning group meetings are gonna be conducted virtually over the next several months. We have established the outcome area working groups; this is one of 6 that we'll get into later on the slide. We are going to be deploying a number of digital equity surveys to help us gather information from

both organizations at the State, regional and local level, and from individual residents of California to seek information from them about their individual barriers and needs. The fourth component, I think, is really important. I want to underscore that we are aware that technology empowers us to more democratically include certain entities and expand the table to be a part of this conversation, but that because we're discussing digital equity, some organizations and residents don't have that luxury. So we will be hosting 20 regional and local events across the State in every economic region over the next several months, and that's going to be another touch point for us to engage with a number of partners and stakeholders and local residents to get their input and feedback, but also to hear their lived experiences. And then finally, ongoing public engagement through the broadband for all portal. We've created a digital equity page and a number of other communication methods: our monthly email update and individual meetings, consultations, etc. Next slide, please. So we're talking about working groups. We've got 6 working groups. We've...this is the fourth or fifth working group that will have conducted this week. They're really one on education, one on health outcomes, one on digital literacy and inclusion. There's this one that's gonna focus on essential services, accessibility and civic engagement. A workforce and economic development. And then critically important is a working group on tribal collaboration given that, you know our commitment to coordinate with our tribal nation partners. Next slide, please. Important to note that the source of the funding for the planning grant that's supporting the development of the State's digital equity plan and the subsequent capacity grants that the State will be eligible for once the plan is created, is that we are directed to, as we develop our plan, prioritize investments for 8 covered populations that have been historically and currently on the wrong side of the digital divide. And so everything that we do is really to look through the lens of these covered populations, and to seek to better understand their their lived experiences and barriers, and so the covered populations are individuals in covered households at or below 150% of the federal poverty level; aging individuals; incarcerated individuals; veterans; individuals with disabilities; individuals with language barriers; members of racial or ethnic minority groups; and individuals living in rural areas. Next slide, please. So this particular working group, and and all the working groups are really primarily to convene subject matter experts and practitioners together to collectively co-create and develop strategies that align with the State's broader priorities, again, through the lens of the 8 covered populations. The primary objectives, there'll be 4 meetings of this group over in the next several months, would be to develop a statewide stakeholder map of folks (organizations and individuals we should be planning with, and that would be implementation partners once the plan is developed); conduct an asset inventory of existing programs, plans and services that are currently being offered in this space that can support the outcomes; to promote and encourage participation in the statewide digital equity survey and surveys that you'll hear about later; and then really, once we've gathered that information, you know, pull that together do a gap analysis and develop recommendations to the Department of Technology on potential programs or solutions to be included in the digital equity plan and potentially be funded by a capacity dollars. And so, Anh is there another slide, or is that it? That's your last slide. Great. Well, thank you very much. I look forward to participating in this conversation and learning from the folks who are assembled here to do the work of the working group. Thank you, Scott, thank you. And next slide, please. I would like to introduce our guest speakers for today to further discuss what is digital equity and why is it important? I also

encourage our attendees to answer these, as it's relevant to your organization in the chat. First of all, we have Gladys, our FPO from the National Telecommunications Information Administration. So NTIA for short. Jonathan Porat, our chief Technology Information Officer from California Department of Technology. And Jacob, also known as Jake, Johnson, Deputy Director, Chief Information Officer from the California Department of Rehabilitation. And so with that Gladys it's all yours. Okay, Hi, thanks, Anh. Good afternoon, everybody. Good to be here and good to see this group coming together. Scott mentioned this is our fifth one this year, this week, not year. But anyway, my name is Gladys Palpallatoc. As Anh said, I am one of two federal program officers or state leads for California from the NTIA, again, the National Telecommunications Information Administration. Thank you to the CDT team for inviting us to participate today, and for all the good work that they've been doing. It's also great to see so many partners and familiar faces on this, on this Webinar, and looking forward to working with those we are getting to know. My focus today is to share the definition of digital equity from NTIA's perspective, objectives of the planning process, and how it will factor into the state capacity grant phase. For the Digital Equity Act programs, digital equity is defined as the condition in which individuals and communities have information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in society, and the economy. Digital inclusion enables and leads to digital equity. This means that the activities that are necessary to ensure that all individuals have access to, and the use of, affordable information and communication technology, such as reliable, fixed, and wireless broadband Internet service, Internet enabled devices that meet the needs of the user, and applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration. It should also include obtaining access to digital literacy training, the provision of quality technical support and obtaining basic awareness measures to ensure online privacy and cyber security. For us, digital equity as the goal and digital inclusion is how we get there. As Scott already mentioned, CDT was awarded a 4 million dollar state planning grant for year one beginning December 2022 to November 2023. The planning phase that we're currently in now, the objective is to develop a State Digital Equity Plan. The planning process requires engagement of major key stakeholders like yourselves and the public throughout the State, to solicit input and feedback from communities and sectors like yours to develop the State Digital Equity Plan. As part of BIL, or the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Digital Equity Act and BEAD, the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program goal is connecting 100 percent of all Americans. So local and regional participation is a must, and all voices need to be heard in order for us to be successful. The State will need the help of each working group to reach and engage your networks statewide, deeply and meaningfully. The planning process will factor into the next phase: the State capacity grant. Only entities who complete the planning grant program can apply and a State Digital Equity Plan is required in order to be eligible. The State capacity grant will be used to implement the State Digital Equity Plans as well as promote digital inclusion. NTIA anticipates a NOFO or a notice of funding opportunity for the state capacity grants by the end of this year. By mid 2024, we anticipate that the 5-year state capacity implementation will have already begun. That is the end of my quick presentation. Thank you so much again, and we look forward to working with each of you. Please reach out to us if you'd like more information, or if you would like a briefing for your own organizations. Thank you, back to you Anh. Thank you, Gladys. And next I would like to introduce Jonathan. Please come off mute, and we'll spotlight you. And while Jonathan is

doing that, encourage everyone, oh thank you, Jacqueline, to drop what you think digital equity means for your organization as it pertains to our outcome area working group. Jonathan. Yeah, thank you, Anh, and thank you everyone for coming. It's great to see in the chat all the different places and roles that everybody is playing. So I'm excited to work with you, and especially excited to hear your answer to some of the questions that Anh and our other speakers have been teeing up. My name is Jonathan Porat. I am the new Chief Technology Innovation Officer for the State of California. As well, I also run our Office of Digital Services, which is our web design and data teams and we really try to use both old and emerging technologies in innovative ways to deliver effective and equitable technology for Californians. And to me, kind of building off of that, digital equity is all about making sure that what we provide as services in a digital platform are accessible, usable, and inclusive for all Californians. That means both in terms of the design of those services, so that everyone can access them and understand what they are, and be able to receive them, but also in the delivery of those services: so making sure that Californians can go online to actually get access to things that might only be available online, or if they need to go somewhere, that we're providing options that are accessible and usable to them given their potential different backgrounds and abilities and capacities. I really want to highlight 3 areas in which my teams utilize digital equity. And as we talked about we really strive for innovation, but we really want values driven innovation with digital equity being one of those key values. There's 3 particular areas, as I mentioned that I wanted to highlight today for you all, and that I'd love to get some feedback from you all as we work on building up this plan. The first is that we design our technology for Californians first. So we really design it with the end user, and in this case Californian residents, in mind. We use a lot of terminology that you're probably familiar with things like personas and journey maps. But what that really means is that we do the work to understand, especially for individuals who might fall under one of the 8 groups that Scott mentioned earlier, that the services, the solutions, the technology that we're designing is going to be accessible, usable and inclusive of them. Sometimes really elegant solutions, such as just choosing font choices that are readable by screen readers, or providing alternative text for pictures can make a huge difference in those areas, and sometimes we can develop systems, templates, and other resources to help really scale the accessibility of our work. I'm really proud of a design system that we launched recently with our Office of Data and Innovation at the State of California, to provide more accessibility and inclusivity resources to state technologists and service delivery professionals. The second area I want to touch on is utilizing data and that's one thing that's really important to our team, because, I don't want to speak for my other Government colleagues, but I know sometimes we can stuck guessing what a Californian needs, instead of actually looking at their behavior or asking them. I'm really proud to see that part of the State Digital Equity Plan Methodology relies on us gathering and utilizing data. But for us we see that there's a lot of data, especially behavioral data, in the way that Californians access our websites, access our services that can sometimes be under-utilized. So I hope we can rely and work together to better understand how people are using our services, and what information that might give us, so that we can better design them to be more inclusive and equitable. Lastly, I want to flag that we consider more innovative technologies to make sure that holistically our services are inclusive and equitable. A lot of times, there's a focus on websites and portals, but we know that there's an overwhelming majority of Americans, for example, at lower income levels that may primarily

have a smartphone as their computing device. So, knowing that people may access technology differently, or that people may have different experiences with technology, we want to make sure that we're considering new options, emerging options that may allow us to make it easier for all Californians to access services as well as understand the services or key information that's available to them. One really great example, and one that I'm really proud of from my team, is that we've done some identity management technology pilots through our office and with some state partners to reduce the barriers to services. So basically instead of having Californians need to go out and make a bunch of different accounts to get access to different services, we've been able to test out technology to allow them to log in and verify their identity one time to automatically or much more easily get access to services that they might get through a bunch of different mechanisms. So we're really excited to discuss these different ideas and some of the different things we're working on more with you all as well as getting to learn how you all work on digital equity. And hopefully, we can work together to continue to advance these really critical outcomes and goals. Thank you, Anh. Thank you so much, Jonathan. And oh, there you go. Thank you, Preston, for bringing down the slides. I'd like to introduce Jake, Jacob Johnson from DOR. Thanks, Anh. So one of the benefits of going last on a topic like this is I get to build on what other speakers have said. So Gladys and Jonathan both made some some great points, and I'm going to add to the conversation a little bit. Just want to start out by putting a couple of numbers out there for you. The first is, according to the CDC recent numbers, we know that up to 1 in 4 people in the United States is disabled. So it's a big number. Used to be that you'd always see 1 in 5 presented, and I'm not sure what we got to 1 in 4, but we know that it's a significant portion of the population. We also know, according to a 2019 survey by the Brookings Institute, that 51% of adults in the U.S. would prefer to do business with the government online. They would rather do that than then come into an office, a physical office or contact us by phone and talk to us that way. I'm not surprised. I like to work that way myself. So with that context moving on to digital equity, it's really I feel like I'm going to say it probably less eloquently than Gladys did, but it's essentially the same points. Everyone has to have access to the information and services we provide as government. Full access, right? So what that means is that anyone is able to get the information they need and the services that they need. No one is marginalized. No one is left behind. Everyone is able to fully participate, right? Everybody should be able to derive the same value from the service or the product. So they...everyone needs to be able to get the same benefit. They need to be able to complete the process, whether it's filing their taxes with the Franchise Tax Board, or renewing their license, or obtaining services from the Department of Rehabilitation, where I work, whatever they're doing. Everyone should be able to get the same value out of the process, right. And there should not...this is a key, one actually, it's funny this...what I about to mention is one that we occasionally will have some trouble with, which is that it has to be about the same amount of effort, right? It has to be. Not only does everyone need to have access, but it has to be comparable, right? So if it takes one person 5 minutes to complete a process, we can't have it taking a half an hour for someone else, right? And we see this sometimes, or sometimes you have to ask for a special version of something, and so digital equity means that everyone is able to gain access, and they don't have to go, through a jump a bunch of extra hoops to do it. So, and to me that's key, because, as someone who is visually impaired, legally blind, I feel that there have been times when it's accessible, but do I want to spend an hour trying to book a

flight, or do I want to just call my wife in from the other room and ask her to do it, which I should not have to do, right, and no one should have to do that sort of thing. So and once again what we're talking about is accessibility, right, and it's a not quite as large a topic as digital equity, but just the one component of it. Digital accessibility means the electronic documents, web pages, electronic media, videos, audio files, that sort of thing. So all of that content, all of those services that are connected to that content, and then, of course, the delivery systems, whether that be an app, a website to Jonathan's point, we're seeing more and more ways of getting access, right, and they all have to be accessible. And I particularly like, and I was going to say part of this for the next segment, but I will just mention here: the idea of using journey maps to figure out where everyone is coming from, and sort of what their experiences along the way. For those who don't know a journey map basically just shows the person going through the process, the entire process. But a journey map actually does something else, it's really valuable: it shows how that person is feeling when they're going through the process, which is key, right, because it's not only getting that person from the point where okay, they have their device but are they able to use it? Do they know how to use all the software? Do they know how to derive the benefit? Right? Well, are they connecting to the network? There are a lot of pieces. And if we map that whole process through and see what everyone's experiences, including how they're feeling about going through it, it takes us down the path to digital equity. So just one very quick plug before I hand it back, I just want to mention that the Department of Rehabilitation we do have an accessibility toolkit that provides quite a lot of information. We've been developing it with Department of Technology and other stakeholders for a few years now. So it's the web accessibility toolkit, and it's about halfway down the page on the DOR Website. I'll throw it in the chat after I finish speaking just so you all can check it out, but it's a good place to start. It's not it's not everything, but it's a start. And with that I'll hand it back to you Anh. Thank you so much, Jacob, and that is eloquent, so no worries about comparing yourself to anyone else. And thank you folks in the chat as well, defining what digital equity means to you, Norma, Bruce, Melissa, Tracy, Yumi. And I really like what Tracy said too: plus one to what Jacob said, and equity means universal accessibility on congruent terms. So that's a short one that I can read to the group, but feel free to check out the chat more. So thank you for that, Gladys, Jonathan, Jacob. And the next portion, can we bring back the screen Preston? Okay, perfect. All right. So the next slide, please. In this portion, we're hoping to again have a multi-dimensional conversation on these questions. If you're comfortable going off mute, on camera, please do so, and raise your hand so we can unmute you. Or if you are more comfortable on the chat, please use the chat as a way to share resources, and you know, plus ones and reactions and all that. So with that I'll read the first question for the group: what digital equity bears to your organizations or community members, and or those who you serve experience? So how do those barriers impact access to essential services, civic engagement, and accessibility? I see April. Can I ask you to unmute? Here I am. Hi, everyone. I'm April, I'm the executive Director of the California Commission on Disability Access, and our stakeholders are people with disabilities as well as business owners, and I would say that there, that there is, I think a misperception about digital equity for people with disabilities. I think a lot of times there's a focus on the impairment and not the environment by which people with disabilities are trying to access those accessible technologies and websites. And so I think, I think part of it is, I think business owners need more tools to know what the...not, just what the minimum

obligations are but what is the usability of their website? How can they do user testing? And I also think some of the other barriers that people with disability face is some of them are living in poverty, and may live in more rural areas, so they don't have as much access to broadband. And I think also they encounter websites that are non-compliant. And when that happens they have to rely on paper forms which take longer and so it causes people with disabilities to be behind the curve to be able to... you know, for example, when a government entity or a business it goes online, they're not able to fully take advantage of the streamlined services that these new websites are providing, and so I think it has a lot to do with intersectionality, I think it's important, too. I'll just finish by saying, I think it's important that we think of people with disabilities not just in terms of their impairment, but also, and I don't think of you know my disability as an impairment per se, but I think that thinking of it in terms of intersectionality, that people with disabilities have come from all different walks of life and economic circumstances and races and genders and identities, and I think that that means that they can face a lot of intersecting concerns from all the other groups that are on this call as well. Thanks. Thank you for your comment. Want to encourage you, going through all the screens to make sure I'm not missing anyone. Ah, I just wanted to share that there are no wrong answers. And, like I said, that we said at the outset we're at the beginning of this process, and, you know, really embracing the uncomfortability of potentially not having all the answers and encouraging how like, you know, having these joint vulnerable conversations can help us, you know, lead to where we need to go. So really wanna make sure we're creating a safe space for folks to feel comfortable here to share. Thank you for that, Scott. And I see Norma and also Jacqueline, asked a really good question in the chat, so I'll be reading that while, Norma I'll unmute you. Yeah, hi, everyone, I'm Norma Fernandez from Everyone On, and we do a number of things at our organization. One of them is to provide digital skills trainings to folks, and it's really introductory. It's meant to expose people to basic computer and Internet skills. And one of our main populations that we serve in particular in Los Angeles, and the broader bay area are folks whose language may not be, first language, may not be English, and if they do have or if they do speak English, it might be limited. So as we provide our digital skills trainings, and we offer them virtually actually, we have found that there are barriers, language barriers, right. So a lot of the content that is online is primarily in English, and so part of our digital skills training introduces folks to the translation options they may find. So I think that is both a barrier, but also opportunity, as we think about trainings, how we make sure folks are knowledgeable and equipped to find translation options for them to really fully embrace and participate in the content that's found online that is predominantly in English. Which you know affects other opportunities, not just accessibility, but civic engagement, access to services. So I think, you know, always thinking about language, and that how that you know the role that language plays in accessibility and access to options. Thank you for sharing that. And question I want to pose to the group, but similar to number one, too, is, if you are a government agency or an organization who has virtual engagement like this, right, what are some of the barriers that you've noticed from people engaging? So we would love to hear that, too. But Rebecca. All right, and I am back. I've been loving all of these sessions, and I'm so happy to be able to contribute to all of them. So thank you again for hosting and for having me back in this space. And for those of you guys who don't know who I am. My name is Rebecca Coleman, I'm the Digital Equity Inclusion Officer for the City of Long Beach. And this conversation is definitely, very near and dear to my

heart, and I definitely want to uplift what Norma, just shared as well, and just also shine a light on just various challenges and barriers that, you know, communities of color have to go through just to be able to receive any type of resource and services, and I definitely want to elevate transportation services. Many of our residents in Long Beach do take advantage of public transportation, and if a digital inclusion resource or service is not being aligned to that, then they're not going to be able to reach it. We've also seen a huge barrier with child watch services. So if we're hosting some type of a community meeting or some type of engagement process, and there's not a space for them to bring their child to engage like that could also be a huge barrier. One of the things that we did when we were co-creating our digital inclusion roadmap was partner with a community based organization that provided child watch. And the reason why I love that particular organization is that they created a space for the child to feel safe: they brought arts and crafts, the individuals that were also providing the services were bilingual in Spanish. So it was really a great place for us to be able to not only engage with our residents, but also feel that our residents can bring their children into the space. A big thing also is just a lack of trust. There's so many different players as part of this digital inclusion ecosystem, and unfortunately, some community members don't have trust, and for us, as a local government, we've had to acknowledge that because of historical harm that has been done by the Government, you know, many community members don't trust us so we've had to try our best to work closely with our community partners to be able to address those issues as well. Not so much right now, but we've also had particular issues when there was a lot of issues going around regarding immigration, you know, many of our residents also weren't wanting to come outside and engage if they were concerned with being deported if they were undocumented. So we just have to be extremely intentional and mindful with how we're designing any of these programs, and really making sure that we're uplifting any type of barrier that may be an issue. And for me the one thing that I've learned the most is just by showing up in community and learning from our community based organizations. They have taught me so much and have really strengthened our ability to be as equitable as possible, and also making sure that we're having intentionality with everything that we're doing. And I just encourage this group to continue to learn. I really appreciate the journey mapping process, and really making sure that we're understanding that we cannot take a one size, fits all approach to this, that we really need to uplift the different circumstances that are happening in each each community, and elevating that as we're designing these solutions. So I just wanted to shine a light on those barriers, and I'm so excited that we're having this conversation and looking forward to hearing and learning from my other colleagues that are part of this meeting as well. Thank you. And thank you, Rebecca. Every time you come on like "yes, she's here!" to lend us, you know, the experience and lessons learned that you've had too. So I saw Terrance, you had your hand up earlier, is that still relevant? Or would you like to come off mute? I can't even figure it out, all right. Well Scott, Scott opened the door, and I wanted to double down, I think April said it, and I think a question just popped up on the chat from Siskiyou County, but I work for Rural County Representatives, we represent 40 counties throughout to state, and you know, and I'm looking at that first question: we can't even get to addressing, many of our communities can't even get to addressing those barriers, because there's not adequate broadband access. So that's what we continue to hammer home is that you can't even have any of this if you don't have the road to get there. So you know, looking at through a rural county perspective, that's what our

organization is hyper focused on: getting high quality broadband access, so that we can accomplish all these, uh, these high goals like Rebecca, like what Rebecca said. She laid it out really well, and I love the idea of thinking about what her story was. And what the rural community and the rural-urban connection strategies, and how this this process can help bridge that gap. So. Thank you for sharing that. All right. So we'll move on to the second question. But if folks want to comment on the first...is that a comment, Scott? Well, real quick, I thought that Robin made a really great...Robin Richards from Siskiyou made a great and relevant comment in the chat, and I'm wondering, Robin, I think what you typed in speaks for itself, but if you were willing to or able to come on and speak a little bit more about it, I think it's just incredibly relevant given the size of our state and the diversity of geography, and challenges that individual communities have. I'm trying to find Robin in our participant list. Don't see...is Robin still in the room? Yeah so, well, and I don't mean a single Robin out. I think that the comments were very powerful and concise so if Robin wanted to come on and...oh there's Robin. There we go! Okay, now. Oh now, I'm unmuted. Okay. You're good. Well I think, I think you're right, it's exciting to hear what everyone's doing but we're like at the bottom of the rung here in terms of not even having access in some places. So it doesn't matter if the websites accessible if you can't even get the website, then that's a problem. We struggle, I'm...it's not...we don't have as big of a problem here, but we have really slow Internet. We've not really caught up. And I live in the city of Yreka so it's probably closer to services in Siskiyou County than, let's say Somes Bar or Seiad Valley, or Happy Camp or something like that where they might have less services. So I think there's a real range of things from just availability, and then getting into the access and talking about some of the more sophisticated...the other thing in rural counties, and I put that in the chat, too, is we don't have a lot of organizations like you all do. I know the one person that mentioned from the rural organization, he had 40 counties. Well, that's a lot of territory to cover. So I think that's...that's something that we really need to kind of address. So that's...those are just my comments to add to. And thank you for coming off mute and sharing that as well. Okay, I will... We can always go back to 1 if folks have comment on that. I just want to introduce our graduate student assistant to read us question number 2. Noelle, which my coming off mute to introduce yourself? Hi! My name is Noelle. I am a graduate student, doing my masters of public policy at UC Berkeley. I do have some experience; last summer I interned with the Department of Finance and one of the projects we were working on includes FI\$Cal, so some of that background and kind of state IT projects. And in my professional career I have also worked in IT and web development and accessibility. So that's some things I bring...some perspectives I bring. In this capacity, I'm here to support this working group as one of the 6. And so we would like to hear in this next part any steps you or your organizations are taking to address digital equity barriers to increase access to essential services, increase civic engagement and address a variety of accessibility needs. So please share any effective strategies or examples. Robin, I'm not sure if that is a hand from earlier, if you would like to answer that question first. Nope, okay not a problem. April in the chat said, we are partnering with DOR on the toolkit for businesses, and website accessibility. Would love for you to comment more on that, if that's possible. Paul. I always gotta remember to unmute myself. Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Paul Morris, I'm the Project Management Office Director for the San Diego Housing Commission. We started on this venture about 2 years ago, in February of 2021, and I want to shout a kudos out to Rebecca from Long Beach,

she was one of the first folks we met with and talked about the program they have. In this time, we've actually built...the thing for us that's been biggest is building relationships with community based organizations and working with other cities and communities around us to help figure out how we solve this problem together, because this is just not a one organization problem to solve. And so we've been able to kind of build partnerships for training for those folks that need it around this, we've built donation sites and gotten donations out there, we've had resource fares. It's...we've been trying to lead everybody to water, not everybody wants to drink. There's a lot of issues with folks that don't want access to the Internet for security reasons, they're concerned about stuff. Recently, we actually had a good conversation with the program manager and technical lead for Big Apple Connect. For those of you that don't know it: New York City decided for their public housing to do a public-private partnership with ISP providers to provide Internet services and even TV services at no cost to them. So that's the third leg that we're currently working on. Our biggest barrier right now is the cost for our seniors, our costs for our folks that are living in public housing. The costs are all over the place. Even with the ACP program, it still doesn't bring it down enough for a lot of folks to be able to actually afford Internet. I mean they're making decisions between rent and food and Internet access. And so that's been tough for us. So one of the things that we're trying to look at right now is: is it going to be worth for us, within the city of San Diego and the county of San Diego to try to build these public-private partnerships with some of the ISP providers to find a way to bring this cost down? I mean, if we could get this for free, if we could make it a utility, if we could include this in rent, it'd be great to find a...that's really our biggest hurdle right now, because trainings there, it's getting folks to the training. We got the donations going. For us, it's a cost issue getting our folks who have low income, the ability to afford it. And one of the things we've done is we've done mailings to the 16,000 folks that are consumers of our services, because obviously we can put everything we want on the Internet, they don't have access to it. And we've been, you know, feet on the grounds just getting out there into the communities. And so I think you know we, we've kind of overcome some of the language barriers, we know how to address that. I think this is the biggest hurdle we're down to right now, and I think if we can find...and that's one of the reasons I'm attending this is to get more ideas and thoughts on how do we get these costs down even more? How do we, you know, figure out those partnerships because the costs are all over the place. We have folks paying crazy costs all across the board for access to the Internet and broadband. So I think it's great. I'm really happy to participate in this, and I'm really glad to hear what other people are doing, so that we can find solutions and work on them together. So I appreciate that, I appreciate you giving me the time to kind of state what we're doing here at the San Diego Housing Commission, and we're far from figuring it all out, but I believe that we will get there hopefully sooner than later on solving some of these problems. So thank you all for all that you're doing too and for sharing all this information with us, it's very useful. And thank you for sharing with us. I think you are correct: we want to get, convene folks who are working on the ground to share ideas, and that's the only way we can get there, right? And April, I know you had to unmute, so let me try that again. You can see you can come off. There I am. Thank you. I'm sorry about that I was getting an error message that I wasn't allowed to unmute. I just wanted to share that to answer the question about how we're addressing our working with the stakeholders is, we are in the process of creating a toolkit in consultation with Department of Rehabilitation, as well as the Division of

the State Architect to create a toolkit that will address website accessibility targeted for businesses. And so you know we're not...we're not going to be duplicative of the website toolkits that already exist. We're going to analyze the toolkits that are already out there and target these to businesses specifically. And we're also going to convene a group of stakeholders from the business and disability communities to make sure that our toolkit is accurate and usable, and we're going to disseminate it to different groups of people in the next...within the next year and a half. And so we're going to be working on that. And we're also working on looking at our own website, because we have a lot of accessibility tips on the CCDA's website, but they're not all translated into other languages. And so we're looking at that as well. Thank you. Thank you for sharing. And then Tracy and Brenda, I think you're having a conversation on the chat. If you're comfortable going off mic and share that with us. And I can find you in the participant list if you can't use the hand, raise function. Oh, yes. Okay. There we go. Yeah, there we go. Hi. Everyone. Thanks, Tracy Rosenberg with Media Alliance. I wasn't planning to speak, but we've had lots of interesting conversations. And one of the things that we were talking about on the chat was that one of the, I don't want to say upsides...but one of the silver linings of the COVID pandemic was what seemed to be a pretty, you know, statistically documented, uptick civic engagement when it came to sort of local government meetings of various kinds, and the State also saw it as well that it seemed like was sort of technology driven. In other words, given the sort of opportunity to participate remotely, a whole lot of people that had literally never gone to a city council meeting or a school board meeting felt all of a sudden this was something that they could do, and they could talk to their government one on one. And at least in my own experience, because I'm one of those people that used to go to these things in person, we had people calling in and phoning in sometimes with really crappy equipment, you could tell, that they were struggling to do it, but they were doing it, who never did things like that before, and said so. So I think it's sort of an example or an opportunity of sort of the fact that technology will enable increased civic engagement, that it's not just a question of supply, although it's certainly that and we are working on that, but also sort of a question of the opportunity on the government side for people to interact in a meaningful way with technology. So I thought maybe something that we could just sort of keep in our focus line is the idea that public services and public meetings should open up their processes in ways that encourage remote civic engagement. Because I'm not sure that would have happened without COVID and it's important that we take those lessons and keep them, and sort of broaden those opportunities. You know, Anh, I would just like to just say, Tracy very interesting, and that leads me to kind of just throw another question out there. I know folks have their hands up, so, not expecting people to address it. But really, as part of this process over the next several months like, do we ask ourselves the question? As you know, a coalition of entities that are providing services online to folks, both, you know, State and local government, nonprofit organizations, private sector entities: what role can we all play in ensuring that folks are aware of, you know, subsidy programs and tools to help them get the service and the devices and the training they need to access those services. And so I, you know, I'll be really interested to see what this community as it expands and continues to think about that comes up with. Thank you for posing that question, Scott, and I think that's something we can definitely review this March and May, June and as we can see you building SDEP. Abby, I your hand. Yes, thank you. So my name is Abby Browning. I'm with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. And I just

wanted to chime in for a moment here. This has been an excellent discussion. I've been listening, and then I've also been reading in the chat some great points about how do we define civic engagement? How do we define essential services? But in some places that doesn't really matter like what the rural gentleman, the gentleman representing the rural counties mentioned. You know, if you don't have the road but you know, digital equity is not an issue. Nobody...it's equitable, because nobody has access. But with the emergency services side of things is, you know, I'm very concerned about the access to preparedness materials for notifications of any kind of disaster that's coming their way. There are some communities that we, we being the emergency services personnel, go door to door, knocking on doors, because that is the only way to get information out. I've heard where they put sirens on police vehicles and go through neighborhoods to let...alert people "you gotta leave, you gotta go". So some of these things is just while we do redundant things, it's really sad that that happens in 2023, and that's the way that we we get in touch with people that they don't have these digital access. And then, when it comes to after the disaster, the recovery. Recovery is much easier and much faster when there is some kind of broadband infrastructure in place, when there is some kind of access to the different folks that were affected by the disaster to be able to build up their lives again after experiencing something like that. So I just, I just wanted to say that this has been so far it's been extremely interesting to hear the different points, and I'm glad that we have such a good representation from around the state to bring in these different viewpoints. So thank you for that. Thank you, Abby. And Brian. I see your hand. Thank you. So just wanted to kinda underline the comments about the Brown Act, and also just mentioned that one of the things that we've heard from our members is that with the Brown Act it's...in create...with the pandemic there's been sort of an increase in civic engagement with individuals access and their government remotely and essentially...and kind of all of the different advisory bodies that are part of county boards, that there's been an increased level of engagement sort of throughout this time. So just kind of underlying that with some of those going away in February, and that's just something that that's been on our minds, and that we've been hearing from our members. Thank you for your comment Brian. And I realized we didn't ask you all the third question, or make it available for folks to comment on, you know, insights outside of 1 and 2. So just reading the question for you all, please share any reflections you might have about our discussion today, topics we have not mentioned, or digital equity, as it relates to our outcome in general. So, Nancy, I see your hand. Yeah, if not too late, I wanted to comment on the second question. I'm Nancy Verduzco, I'm a senior tech coordinator at Arellano Associates. We are a public outreach forum in Southern California that focuses on equity and innovation. So this topic of digital equity is so crucial to our line of work as you can imagine. We love to be creative and, you know, we create things like websites or interactive mapping tools. But one of the things that I've really learned with in my years here is that as great as all these tools can be, they're not really effective if they're not reaching the communities that are being impacted, or if folks don't know how to use them, right. So one of the things that we have been doing and trying to implement a little bit more in our projects is to partner with community CBOs to host in person, community meetings or workshops where we can really walk them through the process of using these tools, you know, kind of like a tutorial of how to use the survey, how to use this mapping tool website, whatever it is, because they can have a link to something, but if they don't know how to navigate it, it's not that useful. So that's really something we've been using to really

ensure that they're able to provide feedback and input. So I'm really loving this conversation and just hearing how everybody is working around these different barriers and so super excited to be a part of this conversation. Thank you so much for joining us, and would love to hear, you know, the impact, the outcome of your partnership with CBOs, too. So at this time, if no one else has their hand raised, we can move to the next portion. Yes, okay. Don't want to slow down anyone, but, as you all mentioned earlier, there's a lot of barriers learned, but also a lot of programs are happening on the ground, and with that we want to make sure there's a way for us to capture these status granular on the ground information, and so our team developed tools, and I want to pass the mic over to Rachna Vas, from Broadband Equity Partnership, to talk about how to take action and how we can move from the barriers to the solution. Rachna. Thank you, Anh. Next slide, please, and the next slide. So, all of you heard Scott Adams talk about the State digital equity planning process and a component of that planning process is a needs assessment, and in order to conduct a needs assessment, you need some really good tools, and we have developed a tool to conduct an asset inventory of the existing programs, plans, and services being offered across California. This tool, the DEEM tool will help us understand what programs are being offered, where they're being offered, and to whom they're being offered. So it's imperative that many of you who work in some key organizations and working grassroots...work, work on delivering grassroots level programs to people in need in the community, it's imperative that we know about these programs. So April Dawson just wrote in the chat about developing a business toolkit. I think that's wonderful, and we'd love to know more about it. So, April, please fill out this tool and tell us more about this toolkit, that that you plan to develop and deploy. Again, any programs that you are developing to leverage technology, we would love to hear from you about these programs. We we want to understand what's being offered throughout California to address digital equity in in different regions across the State. This tool is going to be released in a couple of weeks, and we plan to release it in both English and Spanish and we have taken into consideration accessibility features. So we are including accessibility features into our survey tools in conjunction with the Department of Rehabilitation. We have worked very closely with Jacob Johnson's group to address accessibility for our tools. Next slide. So who should participate in competing this? Well, if you leverage technology to provide a program or service, we want to know about this. And so you're offering, you know, 5 programs, please tell us about those 5 programs. We have a number of questions in in this DEEM tool that will ask you to describe your program, describe your your target audience, your target demographics. So please answer is exhaustively as you can, so that we may have a better understanding of what's being provided in California. Next slide. So while we're concurrently addressing what organizations and entities are providing what State agencies are providing for the California public, we need to understand what the California household is experiencing at the same time. Next slide. We need to address the digital equity barriers that California residents face. So what are California residents experiencing in terms of Internet accessibility, affordability and access to skills training? What's happening in the household? This is where we need to deploy the public survey, and our public survey has been developed, again with accessibility features in mind, and we've translated it into 12 languages. We want to be sure that we're being as comprehensive and inclusive in our outreach, so we've also included the ability for audio in those 12 languages in these surveys. So it's not a screen, reader, it's actually a human being using an intonation in the language that is being translated

for these surveys. So this survey again will be released in a couple of weeks, and we really need your help to push this out to the people that you serve. So push out the DEEM tool to other organizations and partner entities that you work with and push out the public survey to the the constituent groups that you serve on a daily basis. We really need to hear back about what's going on throughout California, both in the household and with the programs and services being provided throughout the State. So thank you. Next slide. Just so, you are aware, our survey, for the public survey, is going to be disseminated via an online tool and via a phone survey. The phone survey will be done in 4 languages, the online survey again in 12 languages, and it will be disseminated in all 58 counties, and it will oversample for the 8 covered populations. Next slide. Before we actually get to, to Anh, we've got some time. So if you don't mind, I'd love to be able to just give you a sneak peak of what these tools look like. So, Preston, if you don't mind just showing a quick preview of the survey tools. So this is just an example of some of the questions that we're asking organizations to be able to assist with understanding what's happening in your facilities. You know, what might be barriers to your broadband programs. So again, we want to understand accessibility, affordability both at the household level, and also from an organizational level in terms of your capacity to be able to engage your constituent groups. And if you could actually show the public survey. So I guess we can't really see the screen too well. But these are just some of the questions where we're asking people: how are you using your Internet service on a daily basis? We just want to understand what people might need to use the broadband access for on a daily basis. So there are a number of questions throughout the survey tools that help us to gauge what's going on in the household in terms of how people are engaging broadband access for: whether it's shopping, for accessing educational services, excuse me, or whether it's for accessing workforce development and, you know, accessing jobs online. Back to the PowerPoint. So if you have any questions about these tools, if you need some help in understanding how you might be able to disseminate these survey tools, please feel free to contact any of us. We're here to help. We would love to know more about what you're offering. So if you feel that these tools are not able to capture fully what you offer on a daily basis, please seek us out. Please send us an email and share with us your plans, your programs, your offerings, and will be sure to document it. Thank you so much. With that I will turn this over to Anh. Thank you, Rachna, and I thought I saw Scott's hand went up of earlier so I just want to make sure to circle back to you Scott. Oh, yeah, Anh thank you real quickly. I just wanted to thank Rachna for walking through the survey tools and wanted to the underscore that you know we have the benefit of some planning dollars to develop the digital equity plan, and we do have some constraints around time and geography and the number of communities and individuals we need to reach. So just wanted to reinforce the call to action that we need your support to both fill up the digital equity mapping tool and distribute that through your ecosystems. And then, similarly to help promote the online version that throughout all 58 counties to the extent we can will be optimized for mobile phones in those areas where folks can't connect online. I want to make sure that we stress the we are hearing...so, Nancy, I believe it was your comment, you know we're issuing the call to action in many forums, and I did mention the 20 local and regional events will be doing around the State. We will, we'll be walking through with local partners and stakeholders how to leverage and deploy and distribute both the digital equity mapping tool and the online survey. So we built that into the process and we, you know, do intend to do that. Thank you, Scott, got claps from

Nancy. And in the chat too: will survey results be made available such that local authorities can refine the results to their specific local areas. Rachna or Scott, would you be able to answer that really quickly? Yeah, I'll answer that: as Rachna said, we're going to do 2 versions of the survey that is going to be the phone survey, which is, you know, going to be, you know, using a scientific method and having a different degree of, you know, accuracy, but not granularity and that survey we're doing with the California Emerging Technology Fund and the USC Annenberg school. So the...a summary of those survey results will be shared, and the results of the online survey will also be summarized and shared as well. And so the level of granularity and usefulness to local jurisdictions and partners is really going to depend on how far might those same local jurisdictions and partners can promote that, you know, survey through their communities. And so we definitely want to make sure that the information that is gathered is a benefit not just to the State, and its development of the plan and helping to make data informed decisions, but to you all, our partners, who, you know, in implementation. So, the answer is, it's a long answer for yes. We like the clarity, so thank you so much. And so I'll take the next steps and just highlighting what's next for our outcome area working group. As you know, I'm subbing in for Cole; Cole is on the line. He'll be back within a few weeks, so you'll see me and Cole in the next few working groups. Next slide, please. Okay. So our 3 priorities as we look forward to next few months is developing strategies that align with as SDEP priorities, conduct our gap analysis and then connect research, evaluate assets and develop recommendations for CDT within our outcome area working group. So again, using the tools that Rachna walked through earlier and incorporating this, having our GSAs and our co-chairs and all the participants in this group working through, finding out what exists, who are the players, and what do we need to do to bring us closer to digital equity? And next slide, please. Okay. And then to break it down a little bit more. Our March, May, and June meetings will cover these questions. So if you would like to be a speaker, and you feel your work can speak to this, please get in touch with us, and be one of our guest speakers. So in March: how does digital inequity create disparities when it comes to essential services, accessibility and civic engagement? In May: what digital equity programs are currently working well in your community and what's missing? And in June, using the public survey and DEEM data to shape a SDEP priorities. So by June, we're hoping to have data from the tools we mentioned earlier, and be able to share with you. So that's the plan for the next 3 meetings. It's all scheduled. And so if you don't have that on your calendar already, get in touch, and we'll get that on your calendar. Next slide, please. Okay, this is a high level overview of our SDEP timeline. As you can tell, we are right now in the mid-February outcome area working group. I see Preston with the...sorry...that want to raise your attention to the rest of the two-third of our timeline, right. We want to have a draft ready in July for public comment in August, which leave us 3, about 3 months to really refine the plan, and finally submit that to the NTIA hopefully mid to late November. So that is the plan and all part of this, we need your help to engage community members to bring in voices and making this plan as inclusive and as equitable as California can be. So we encourage you to be part of this process, and stay engaged throughout. Next slide, please. There we go. I was like...So our digital equity planning email is digitalequity@state.ca.gov. Tish also dropped a few links in there for our broadband portal. So any upcoming events you can find it under broadbandforall.cdt.ca.gov/events but also other links in there as well. Like I said before, all recordings, transcript, slides will be on our portal

under past events. And this is mine, Cole's, Fiona, and Noelle's email addresses if you would like to stay in touch, or if you have a report of great work that you're doing, they send it our way, and we'll incorporate it for next time. That's all from me. If you have any questions for us, we'll stay on for a few minutes to answer any of your questions. Thank you for joining us. Want to take the time to thank our ASL interpreters as well. I know sometimes I speak so fast but thank you for being here with us and for our speakers and all attendees joining us this afternoon.