Essential Services, Accessibility, and Civic Engagement
Outcome Area Working Group Meeting Transcript
March 16, 2023

Okay, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the second outcome area working group meeting for the essential services, accessibility and civic engagement. Before we get started, I have a few housekeeping items. Next slide. This meeting is being recorded, we will be posting the recording of this meeting, the slides and the transcripts to the broadband for all portal. I terms of interpretation, we do have two ASL interpreters that are spotlighting, and if you cannot see them, please notice on the slide we have a recommendation for using the view and the side by side speaker setting. We also have closed captioning option as an available. We will be heavily using the chat options, so please feel free to start by adding your name in your title into the chat, and we'll use that for speaking comments, thoughts throughout the meeting today. And finally, if you haven't used it before, I'd like to have you notice on the toolbar at the bottom of the screen there's a little smiley face with a plus sign. We have reactions. And that is where you'll be able to raise your hand. And so we will have a component in the second half of our meeting for the public to join and share comments and have a direct dialogue. Next slide. So in terms of an agenda today we'll start with an opening panel of experts in the essential services, accessibility and civic engagement field. They're gonna speak to us about ways in which digital inequities create disparities in essential services, and specifically how their organizations are addressing digital equity barriers. We'll then have time for an interactive discussion like I said about the lived experiences of those impacted by the digital divide. But for now, I'm gonna hand it off to Noelle, who's a graduate student assistant from Berkeley Goldman school of public policy to provide us a brief synopsis of last month's meeting. Noelle. Hi, there, yeah. So last month we kicked off our series first by reviewing the process for creating the State digital equity plan. Roughly, the timeline is, we hope to have it…well we hope to submit it by November of this year. We had some…also discussion from Jonathan Porat over at…who leads the State's digital services team on projects they're working on, including an identity management pilot and Jacob Johnson from the Department of Rehabilitation, highlighted an accessibility toolkit for websites that can be a resource for digital equity. We also spent some time defining digital equity in the context of essential services and civic engagement. Something that came up from this discussion was that it has to be about the same amount of effort to access services to be considered equitable. So, if this site is deemed accessible, but it takes longer for users with disabilities, for example, that is not equitable. And really, in this discussion a focus is on the outcomes: so that people have equal access to information and government services, and some examples include filing taxes or renewing a driver's license as examples of the kind of essential services we're talking about. And then we had a pretty robust community discussion. The first half centered on identifying common barriers to achieving digital equity. One thing that came up in this discussion is that broadband availability is the prerequisite for all of this work we're talking about on digital equity. And we are not fully there yet. We

recognize that. And again, some of the outcomes due to these digital equity barriers are that there is more challenges for emergency, preparedness and recovery. Other barriers include logistics, like transportation challenges, lack of child care and language barriers are all issues that we seek to address. And really the idea of intersectional identities. So in this state digital equity plan, we are addressing specific covered populations, I think we'll discuss that in a bit, but there's 8 of them, but these are not mutually exclusive identities. And then the last part we discussed was about strategies to address these digital equity barriers, and just to see what people are doing across the State. One topic here was around remote governmental meetings in the realm of civic engagement, and how that can be an opportunity to increase participation and also combat some of the challenges with transportation and childcare for people to attend those meetings. And some another really important discussion in this section was about the importance of community based organizations and how they can be a vital partner in our digital equity work because they have in roads already to communities, they are trusted partners where sometimes there can be a gap of trust in the government as a unknown entity, and some specific examples of organizations that are doing digital skills, training on the ground in California. So those were some of our takeaways from last month's meeting. Outstanding Noelle, thank you for that comprehensive kind of review, and before we go on to our speakers, I'd love to do a little bit of level set in terms of what we're doing in terms of outcome area working group the…in the outcome area working group covered population focuses on the covered households. There's 8 of them they're on their screen now. Next slide. In addition, there's 5 main components of our state digital equity plan process. Right now we're in the outcome area working group, which is a component of the virtual sessions that we're doing hosted with health education and workforce and economic development. There's 6 of them. We additionally have the statewide planning group, which is a virtual group that anyone can join as well of subject matter experts. And then we're gonna have digital equity surveys as well as a tool that will go out to organizations to collect out information on digital equity. And in person events that we're calling local outreach events. We'll start to get started in April and they'll run through June. So we look forward to also finding you out in your locations and in your community. Next slide. And finally, really, what are the approaches, and what are the objectives of this outcome area working group? And what we're doing is we're developing this kind of stakeholder map of the whole ecosystem of California: what is happening in each of these outcome areas and in ours is essential services. We're trying to conduct an asset inventory, find out everything that's programs, plans, services. What are the barriers? What are you all doing amazingly well, what's working in your community, or promoting and encouraging participation in all of the different components of the State digital plan, as well as that equity survey. And then we're gonna try to use all of that information to connect gap analysis to find what we're missing, where are places that we can really bolster up and assist. And then finally develop those recommendations for the final plan that goes into the State digital equity plan. And so those are the 5 real big goals of the outcome area working groups. But now I'd love to kind of introduce and pivot to our first set of speakers. We have Abby

Browning, who's from the Office of Emergency Services; Salena Chow, from the Department of Social Services; Alex Elliott from the Santa Monica Disability Services Coalition; and Brian Carter from the Department of Aging. Each of them will discuss the ways in which digital inequity creates disparate outcomes in essential services, and furthermore addresses the ways their respective organizations are combatting digital inequity. One of the things I'd like to say is, as the speakers are speaking, we're not going to take live questions because we're going to allow them to get through all the information in our allotted time. But please feel free to use the chat feature to share your thoughts, kind of discuss what's being said, and then we can loop back to some of the questions in the next part of this session. So please feel free to use the chat, communicate, and then we'll move forward. And with that, Abby, love to invite you and come on camera and share. Great. Well, thank you so much. I appreciate you having me be a part of this. Before I get started, I do want to make my apologies known to the group: I will be having to jump after after I speak here. As many of you know, the State has just hit our eleventh atmospheric river, and so dealing with that, trying to work through some of the recovery efforts that are starting but then getting ready for our twelfth atmospheric river that is coming next week, and so trying to pre-plan and work with our local governments to prepare as much as we possibly can for that. So I'm a little busy. But this was very important to me that I jumped on here to talk to you all today, so I appreciate that. Yeah, regarding digital inequity, I'm speaking purely from the emergency services world: the firefighters, police officers, EMS, the ones that are the first responders that come out and respond to the folks. Digital inequity is something that we see quite a bit across the State, and it somewhat hinders our ability to reach out and warn people. Evacuation notices: it's a lot easier if everybody has Internet and access to that. However, we do our best to be very redundant in how we do that. We look at the communities that we're serving, or at least we're supposed to, I can say 100% this happens across the State, but we look at those communities and see what is the best way to reach those communities? And in some of our communities our law enforcement and fire officials literally go door-to-door, knocking on the door, saying, "Let's go! Let's go. It's time, we need to get out. There's a fire coming." Or they will go through neighborhoods with speakers blasting, trying to get out. We activate neighbor-to-neighbor programs where, if you have a neighbor that you know, for example, a neighbor that is a deaf and would not hear the alert coming through the neighborhood, then you are, you know, basically tapped to work with your neighbors, to try to inform them of the concern that's going on. In emergency response, redundancy is the name of the game: we use every method we possibly can to reach people to get get the evacuation notices out in time. But that's only one piece of the issue. As was mentioned earlier, there's a lot of recovery that happens. You know the disaster…Usually in California, it's a no notice disaster. Right now, we have a little bit of notice with these storms coming in, but in an earthquake, or a wildfire they just happen. They move through quickly, and then the recovery starts. Recovery is a long haul. It is basically our communities rebuilding their lives, and recovery is somewhat hampered when you don't have the digital equity. The folks that have broadband access, or the folks that have the

technology pieces can move a lot faster through the recovery process than those that do not. We have, we set up our local assistance centers in person where people can come, but that takes time. You have to get to that location, you have to stand in line to talk to the DMV, to talk to the local records folks, whereas if you have a digital access, you can do it from the comfort of your home or you can do it from where you're…the hotel where you're evacuated from or whatnot, you don't have to take the longer time. It is not equitable. And we completely understand that and are trying to do things. We set up mobile units that will go into the community with iPads, and laptops and will work with individuals to get them signed up for the different resources. We tap several of our nonprofits to work on that. I just got off the phone with one in Watsonville right now: Community Bridges that is working to connect the community that was affected by this recent flooding to the resources because they don't have that access, and they don't feel confident enough to do it on their own. And so some of the NGOs will go out and do that for them. We recognize that this is a problem. And we're trying to be very innovative with our solutions. We believe very strongly that everyone in California that is affected by disaster deserves the attention and respect and the resources to get back on their feet. And so we try our best to use every effort that we have to reach them. But it would be so much easier if everyone had that digital, you know…Announcement, yeah, you did ask that. Yes, of course. The announcements when they go through the different communities, they make the announcements in different languages. We…we have, I think, 12 of the State's largest languages on file, ready to go at any time, but we also have cultural competency working groups that work on the different things. One of the newer things that we've just done in this new shelter is working on getting that that Wi-fi access, getting the different technology pieces so folks that are there can have access to that and be faster as far as recovery pieces. But the results remain: that's just that piece. What about preparedness? You know, I get text notifications from my local county, saying that this wildfire preparedness is the thing you should have, this is what you should be ready with. You should have these things in a…take pictures of everything in your home, and you should do this, and you should do that. If you don't have access to a digital platform, how are you getting that information? How are you doing that? We have to use paper flyers. We have to go to the stores where where people shop to try to get information out to them. We do everything we can to do that, to try to make up for the fact that there is this digital divide. But it is it is there. So that's why I'm excited to be a part of this. Again, I can only speak for the emergency services piece of it, there's a lot more that goes into essential services that you'll hear folks from the different state agencies, and the different county agencies that that work directly with these communities. And they're doing great work out in the field and trying to reach the different communities and coming up with these innovative solutions. But right now this is a wonderful working group, and I'm really appreciative of what I learn. And I look forward to watching the video afterwards to hear the discussions that take place. So thank you. No, thank you, Abby. Thank you, Abby, and I appreciate you jumping on first, that you've…so we can get you in and out so you can do your announcements and just based on what you the last thing you said: I look forward to for a future outcome area

working group where we can have you back to talk and a little bit more about those programs or those innovative ideas that counties are doing for creating equitable outreach and equitable services, as it relates to kind of disasters and emergency responses. Yeah, absolutely Cole. And you know, there's a lot of really crazy thinking out there that people are doing to to reach these people and I'm very proud of all of the work that Californians are doing to do this but they shouldn't have to. They shouldn't have to be creative and put wi-fi hotspots on school buses and things like that. So this effort that you guys are taking on is is a wonderful thing, and I'm happy to be a part of it. So thank you. Awesome. Thank you, Abby. And one thing that I wanna as we start to pivot to the next one is, I just I think I want to make sure there's a reminder we keep…we have a lot of conversations about essential services, but this group is also a conversation about accessibility and civic participation, and so I'm excited that we're gonna have other groups come on like Brian from Department of Aging and Alex to kind of kind of talk about accessibility and civic participation. But one of the things I did I just wanna pivot real fast because we kind of have a special guest here here which is chief deputy Chueh has joined us from California Government Operations, and I would love Pam if you have an opportunity just to say hello and kind of introduce yourself to this group. Thank you, Cole. Well, hello, everyone! Can you all hear me? Had a little bit of an issue connecting today. Yes, we can hear you. Yes, you're able to hear me. Hi everyone. As Cole said, I'm Pam Chueh State Chief Equity Officer at the Government Operations Agency, GovOps. For those of you that might not be familiar with the role, it's a newly…it's exciting…it's a newly created position within State government to lead our DEIA, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility – as Cole just reference, that's a very important part of it – in leading our DEIA initiatives, and embedding equity into State operations. And that entails creating a more diverse workforce, embedding equitable opportunities for procurement and contracting. But really it in turn, making our government services more accessible and equitable for all of our Californians. I'm really so happy to be a part of this effort. This is a huge undertaking, and I have to just really applaud my colleagues at CDT and this entire team with Scott and Cole and Anh, and so many others that are here that have just been working tirelessly to, you know, organize all the various working groups. This one in particular, essential services, I'm so happy to be a part of. Just most immediately before taking on this role, I ran a nonprofit, a small nonprofit here in Sacramento, serving 6 counties, serving families with children and young adults with disabilities. It's very meaningful to me, as I have a 12 year old with multiple disabilities, and I took on that role right in the middle of the pandemic where our lives shifted to relying on broadband and Internet and relying on you know…shifting to remote services for for school, for telehealth. Our kids, relying on…all of our therapy: speech, physical therapy, all done remotely. And it really, this is…that these are essential services. And I saw how families who did not have the digital literacy or the devices, the equipment, or even monolingual families that were not able…that were not able to access services. So I bring that perspective and that experience, and looking forward to our…the process this year, of having these really important conversations, and how we solve those problems, and how we at the end hopefully,

when we come up with this State Equity plan, have all those pieces in that we incorporate all of our communities and our underserved populations so for our state and community partners who are part of this effort who are here today: thank you for being here. I know we're really hoping to expand, to bring in more partners, more stakeholders, especially those who are out there who may not usually have a voice so I'm just really happy to be here, and thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk with everyone. Thank you so much, Deputy Director Chu, and thank you for joining us, and we look forward to having you again at the conversation. And so now I'd love to pass it off to Brian Carter, of the Department of Aging. Brian. Hey, good afternoon everyone. Just really wanna thank you all for allowing me to come out and speak today. Really look for any opportunities to share some of the initiatives that are taking place here at the California Department of Aging, and want to thank Deputy Director Chueh for joining us, because it was the Governor's executive order in 73-20 and the Master Plan for Aging which were instrumental in allowing CDA the opportunity to make an effort to bridge the digital divide. And the programs that are supporting CDA's digital inclusion initiatives are all designed to support older adults and adults with disabilities that are impacted by the digital divide and require at least one of the following: a device, connectivity, or digital literacy learning opportunities. The objective of each of our programs is to ensure that the digital divide is closed for program participants and that they may experience an improved quality of life as they're able to interact with their community and learn about and benefit from resources that are available in their respective communities. 'Cause, as we all know, you can't utilize a resource if you are unaware of its existence, and sadly, far too many resources are only available and learned about online. Research also suggests that nearly one in 4 adults, age 65 and over are considered socially isolated and nearly one out of 3 of those over the age of 45 feel lonely. Additionally, older adults are now living longer than they did 20 years ago, partially due to advances in medicine and and medical science, but as a result, many of them are also more likely to live alone, and to be far less socially engaged than in previous generations. So our initial efforts here at CDA to bridge the digital divide was our connections, health, aging, and technology – acronym CHAT – program and through our CHAT program, CDA partnered with the area agencies on aging and distributed nearly 4,000 iPads with data plans, customized onboarding, technical support, and digital literacy training to older Californians. The purpose of this project was to mitigate isolation and loneliness for older adults, which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown which resulted in even more social isolation. And so our goal was to provide them with greater access to resources and information. So for this project, CDA also partnered with the University of Southern California's Graduate School of Gerontology to develop tools that will evaluate the effectiveness of digital devices in reducing social isolation for device recipients. Now the results of the USC study…I'm eager to get those when they're finally published. But I think they will provide some valuable insights that can help to inform future efforts and program designs as well. Now one glaring observation thus far in our efforts to serve older adults is that many older adults have quite the fear of the unknown, and they have

concerns. They had concerns that our survey vendor was trying to scam them right when they called them to…they had to complete a survey in order to receive a device. Many of them thought that was a scam, right, fearful that, you know, how am I…I'm really gonna get a free device by filling out a survey? Right? So we have the…we've had to hurdle some of that skepticism. They also believe that…they were fearful that learning to use the device will be overly complicated. Right? Or that….and they're just…they were unable to foresee how helpful the device would be in their overall quality of life. So many of them also feel like, you know, I've lived my whole life without it, so why do I need it now? So messaging and conveying how it can improve their lives, and what it is…what it is capable of, right, is very important, such as conveying how they could use it to have doctor visits online or communicate with their pharmacies. Aka telehealth, right? Or even online banking rather than sharing their bank accounts, sensitive bank account information with their caregiver, right? Or sharing their debit cards with them, even finding housing, right, is so much easier to do online these days. As well as shopping and other resources. So I mean, with new things, there's always the learning curve, no matter who you are. But we they were…they were even a little more skeptical than than your average person might be. Hey! Brian, can I ask a question? Yeah. Maybe…'cause one of the covered populations is the aging population, it's individual 60 plus. So maybe you could share a lesson learned from your device program of getting your elderly populations connected and something that we can take away from their use of that device outside of the communication in the piece of what you just said, which is, were they using those devices? And how was it creating the opportunity for them to use those devices to connect to essential services or use it to access something they probably would have done in person prior. What is some of those lessons learned? How can we take what you guys have learned and bring it to the larger group here? You know, that's a good question, Cole, and we're still in the…the programs are very recent, so we're still gathering that outcome data. But I will say that, and you know, so…maybe our next meeting I could share a little bit more as more data comes available. But it was interesting, we recently learned just today about a what we call a success story of a gentleman who was…wife….his wife was transferred to a nursing home from…due to dementia, and he, as a result, he was living alone and due to transportation issues and his own health issues, was really unable to go see her, and when he received a device, learned that the nursing, you know, the skilled nurse facility had allow for zoom chats over the devices, and it was just, he was just so happy to now be able to, you know, interact with his wife on the daily basis and it just made such a difference in the life of that gentleman. Awesome, well, thank you, Brian, and also, as we work to get the digital equity survey out, and we're gonna share a little bit more information about the digital equity survey at the end of this meeting, I look forward to partnering with you to find ways to implement it, and make the work in the Department of Aging even more and expand those programs. You got it. So appreciate, Brian, you taking the time, and now we're gonna head over to… Sorry, let me pull my screen back up…Salena Chow from the Department of Social Services. Selena. Good afternoon, are you able to hear me okay? Yes, we can hear you. Great. Good afternoon, everyone I

am Salena Chow, Chief Operating Officer with the California Department of Social Services, and I'm really glad to be here today with you all and serving on this work group on such an important topic that's really cross-cutting across different sectors of state and local government, all working in partnership, and with diversity, equity, inclusion, at so much of the forefront of what we all do today. Pretty much all of the 8 covered populations are found in the service populations for the programs that we serve in one area or another. At the State Department of Social Services, we provide a pretty wide array of different programs, services, and supports to people in California experiencing need, and many of our programs and services are delivered in partnership with the 58 counties, tribes, as well as contracted service providers and community based organizations. Our programs include a disaster and emergency services in partnership with CalOES, so a lot of the things that were previously mentioned are very relevant to our world and really coming to play as we're providing mass sheltering to address housing and homelessness, food assistance and connecting our priority service populations in those impacted areas. And for this round of disasters, particularly migrant farm workers and the immigrant community, and non-english speakers are really a lot of what we're looking at in terms of the digital equity as well. We also have anti-poverty income support programs, such as CalWorks and the State's new guaranteed income pilot and then support services similar to Department of Aging: we have programs for older adults and serving people with disabilities, and are working in partnership on the Master Plan on Aging. We also have childcare subsidies and programs for working families. And we license care facilities to ensure health and safety. So there's a really broad spectrum of different things that we do in the State. And obviously, you know, there's many, many more programs, but this sort of gives you a flavor of it all. And more and more, we are relying on online information and access to deliver those services. So broadband access is really incredibly important to make sure that everybody has the same access to information at the same time. Some of our programs have online application portals and other online or email submissions to help ease and initiate that application process. But again, if there is no access, then it's really hard for them to get their applications in. And this pertains to our CalWorks families, CalFresh, guaranteed income, and especially the disaster recovery piece that was previously mentioned. Since the start of pandemic, we've also been looking at opportunities to provide virtual formats for folks, so that rather than having to come in person for things like hearings or interviews, and then for our foster families and children in foster care we have access to telehealth options that are just extremely important. And then in other programs, we have resources available online, for example, if you're trying to locate the nearest licensed childcare provider or how to connect with your county of residents to apply for services and there are a lot of additional resources for our contractors and service providers that they can find online in terms of like the policy guidance, the program requirements. So all of this information is extremely important for the service delivery of our programs. And really relying more and more on that broadband access and digital literacy and the barriers are very much like what has already been discussed earlier today and in some of the earlier work groups from this week: it all comes down to the

access, the affordability and inclusion, and really recognizing that making that access available that is what it will take to sort of fully accomplish the goals of our program. So we've been trying a number of different strategies to try to improve that and digital equity. We also have implemented some laptop programs in some areas, for example, for foster youth so that they can continue educational activities and our CalWorks programs as well for some of our learning programs. And on the online application front, we have really great partnerships with a lot of our community based organizations and application assistors to help our CalWorks and CalFresh applicants get their application in through the online portal. And then we also are working in partnership with number of other State agencies through the get connected California mobilization effort and the affordable connectivity program. And so that effort involves some outreach strategies with many of our outreach and community partners in our various programs to help get the word out and let folks know that there are opportunities to enroll in subsidy programs that can help lower the cost of broadband access. So we did a launch last year, and we're getting ready to do another one in the next enrollment period coming up. So I'll just wrap it up there and give others the opportunity to share what's going on in their space, but just wanted to thank you all for this opportunity to engage in this conversation with everyone today. No, thank you so much, Salena, for coming and sharing some of the things that Department of Social Services may be doing, and I I think you kind of addressed it a little bit, but I'd love to hear just a…maybe in…just a little bit more on kind of…in terms of the access to those programs, those services is it…are you…is the Department of Services looking at access in multiple ways of how to utilize digital services, to apply for services, is that…I mean…are they allowed to do it through their mobile phones? Is it only through computer desktops? How does the Department of Social services look at access? Yeah, a lot of that is through computer desktop at this time. But there are mobile applications that we are looking at, and there are some programs where we do have that already in the works. So it kind of varies depending on the program. But it's not across the board for every program that we have at this moment. Awesome. Well, appreciate it, Salena, and thank you so much for coming and joining and sharing some more information, and look forward to having you continue into this conversation. And finally, the last speaker that we're gonna have today is Alex Elliott and I wanted to make a correction he's the chair of the Disabilities Commission at the city of Santa Monica, so I'd love to have, Alex, you join and share some information. Good afternoon, can you hear me okay? Yes, we can hear you, Alex, thank you. Thank you so much for having me. It's an honor, and actually a lot of the folks have brought up a lot of things that we've experienced here in Santa Monica. My name is Alex Elliott. I'm a health program analyst with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. I'm also a member of the…I'm a social worker by training, so I'm part of the National Association of Social Workers Disabilities Council, and I'm also the chair of the Santa Monica Disabilities Commission. And what you can't really notice, which is interesting, is I have a disability. So something interesting about virtual spaces is that you wouldn't know I have a disability unless I, you know, showed you in the square, and that's unusual. That's something I had to catch today. Because if we did

this in person, immediately, you noticed I'd probably be the only person with this disability in the room and that's been a interesting insight, as I've been in more of these virtual spaces. But just what started me as to join the Disabilities Commission is I was a social worker in Santa Monica providing field-based outreach and working in our access center. And when people came in we asked 2 questions before we gave them a ticket to get a lunch: we'd ask them are you a veteran, or are you disabled. And heartbreakingly, a lot of people were answering yes to the disability question. So as I got more involved in the community, I wanted to get more involved in the policy arena, so I became a member of the Commission on Disabilities in the city where an Advisory board…we meet monthly. During the pandemic, everything moved virtual. So initially, we had an older platform and one of our big innovations was just moving to Microsoft Teams and starting to integrate all those accessibility features: live captioning, recently adding the ASL language view, just we've been really pioneering and making sure we're using the top-of-the-line accessibility features in our meetings so they're as inclusive as possible. But I also have to acknowledge Judy Heumann, who passed away recently, because a lot of the things that help me design kind of an inclusive digital space I learned from the Crip Camp virtual experiences. I watched Crip Camp, the film, I got connected to some people involved with the film and they involved…they invited me to this Crip Camp virtual experience, and I was just blown away. Just the cadence involving the ASL interpreters, the where…the way they shared information, they had breakout rooms, fireside chats. I was like…I thought I was ahead of the curve, but I realized, you know, there were some things I could take right away to bring to my meetings. Because it's not…it's not just taking a in person meeting, and you know, adding it to Zoom. You have to change the culture, and that's been a big learning. And also that this is a timely meeting, because I would have said something a week ago, but we just had our first in-person meeting after several years, and I noticed I hadn't met some of my other commissioners, and being able to meet in person, is key to build rapport. But also one constraint is the Brown Act itself. That's a challenge. So there…that's gotta be a fix at the legislature. That law was made before zoom, before COVID, before all these innovations, because we'd like to have a hybrid meeting. But you have to have a quorum in person, and that's that's already been a barrier. For example, one person had to leave early because they had a transportation issue. One person actually had to drop off because they had childcare needs. So, one of the big efforts…and I'm very proud of the work this Commission has done for years, we're big on universal design. So just an intervention is just getting people with disabilities involved in planning. It's so much cheaper to plan for inclusion, to plan with universal design, than to build something and retrofit accessibility. So just being part of this conversation now, I'd love if you guys got folks from the low vision community, Deaf/hard of hearing community, intellectual disability, and just get their thoughts earlier. It's going to just save you, save you money down the road. We've been involved in voting. So we check that the physical spaces were okay. I've served as a as an election official, because also those they're like on iPads now, so that's key to even vote. But recently one of the big things we did is look at digital equity. So before COVID we had Joe Devin, who is the founder of the Global

Accessibility Awareness Day, he came and presented and it really resonated with the commission, shared a bunch of really interesting information, curated some great stuff. So we decided, we wanted to create an ad hoc on digital equity. And we made a number of recommendations to the city and I'll cherry pick a few that I think are…will resonate here, but a low-hanging fruit is: whatever you use, and is it Microsoft teams, discord chat, whatever: create an accessibility channel. And on this channel make things that are super helpful, one click away. So your end users are going to be using android, probably iPhone, Mac OS. Take them one click away from the accessibility settings. Get them one click away from the help desk so they can get support and just have those on a teams channel. Also information on social media accessibility settings, on writing alternative texts. And even on the channel you can post a picture and say, "What's a good idea for alt text?", as some of these artificial intelligence tools maybe have a conversation there. So that's a low-hanging fruit that we came up with. We also advocated for hybrid meetings, but that's more of a constraint around the Brown Act, and a key point that another person brought up is, and that keeps me up at night is: that right mix of curating existing things, curating existing things and adapting them, and then creating new things. That's what I struggle with, because I see us recreating worst versions of the wheel, and I was actually reminded of this yesterday as someone in the chat said, I've gotten like 10 different curriculums on digital literacy and I'm overwhelmed and I'm overwhelmed too. I don't know what the best one is, so I'd love if there was an effort, for like a compendium of digital literacy resources. And also they evolve, so in September all your accessibility feature sections are going to be outdated when they update Android and iOS. So I was teaching a class for clinicians in the Deaf/hard of hearing community, and they weren't aware that iPhones have live transcribe because it just came out in the last update so we have to keep these resources updated. And just as a social worker, something I do every month is there's a group in L.A. County focus on the disabilities community and I give a 5 to 10 minute presentation on resources every month. We call community and accessibility resources. The community, gives me feedback, and I present on it. So last month was on live…live transcription features. I've done one on transportation, one on apps, one on things to support well-being. So just a small curated amount, and then I archive it and save it with the group, and I'll post that link in the chat and some other helpful things, and again thank you for having me. No, Alex, thank you for joining. The chat is echoing exactly what I was just gonna say: there's so much that you're going through that are excellent points and so many great things that we need to consider. I'm gonna try to address 2 of them and then ask you a question. The first is that I know you were talking about Zoom channels, or creating some sort of pathway to have certain expectations or settings. That is something that I'd love to have you share any templates, any resources that you've done in the past cause that'd be a great kind of tool to kind of add to this conversation of how we can create and share equitable resources and tools and ideas. So absolutely loved that and in terms of that, I think the point being is that…in a small way, you're in the…hopefully, we are doing a small part of exactly what you're asking for, which is creating a place for creating a repository of all of these digital literacy, tools

and accessibility tools, and essential services ideas. And that is a big component of the State digital equity plan. So I'm sure that our team and anyone in this group are going to follow up with you on a bunch of different resources. But here's a question for you that I had when you were you're speaking, which is you're talking about your commission and hybrid groups and creating it as an accessible place for others to join. Did you see any participation rates in your commission rise or fall with the addition of hybrid? Oh, you're muted, Alex, accidentally got muted! Sorry about that. I'd say it's a small sample size. So when we were in person, I think our participation from the public was a little bit lower than usual, and that's a concern I have, is it's not just making it accessible for the Commission itself, I'm really concerned about getting the community involved. Yeah, I think I need a bigger sample size to answer that. Yeah, no problem. But it did give people the option to even join because they got off work, and they were able to join when they wouldn't have been able to drive to the space, or they had childcare needs. Awesome, Alex. Well, I incredibly appreciate your comments, your thoughts and ideas and I definitely look forward to your continued participation and your view and your expertise in this conversation. This is the second of many working groups, and I hope you're gonna be a major part of all that. So thank you. Thank you for having me. So that is our set of speakers. I felt like I have learned a lot. I do wanna offer and throw…excuse me, Deputy Director Scott Adams, an opportunity just to kind of share: if you heard anything, you learned anything until we go to the next session where we're going to open it up to some community discussion. Yeah thanks, Cole. No, just absolutely grateful to the opening speakers for for the wonderful perspective and background I think, as we're seeing, you know, essential services, which is one of the directions of the, you know, the funding grant or the planning grant we've received from the NTIA to develop the State's digital equity plan is to, you know, first, identify the digital equity barriers for the 8 covered populations, and then, you know, direct investments to address those digital equity barriers and tie them to, you know, key state policy initiatives. And so the way we've set this up with an education working group, a health working group, digital literacy and inclusion, workforce, tribal collaboration, and here the essential services, accessibility and civic participation. We see that in essential services from, you know, broadband and infrastructure is so important to feed the physical services, emergency services, telephone. And then, as we heard from from the Departments of Social Services and Aging, that, bridging the digital divide will provide access to information and services that government entities and companies provide online and create that equitable, you know, playing field and access. And then, Alex, just wonderful information, reiterating what we heard from Jacob Johnson at the Department of Rehabilitation, is that you know we also need to be thinking about how we make digital services accessible to folks based on a variety of needs and not just disabilities but language, literacy levels, etc., and that they're culturally competent. So just a fascinating conversation, and looking forward. I like Cole, your question, I think it came up in the last working group, the first working group meeting that we had was is, we look at the civic participation piece. The same question you ask, Alice, like Alex, what people see like, was there a marked increase in civic engagement and

participation and government and other meetings with Zoom, or you know, the ability to join in remotely, and how can that also be a part of what the State's digital equity plan takes a look at. Yeah, thank you so much Deputy Director Adams, and maybe I think that's something we should wrap in in the one of the next outcome area working groups which is that idea of civic participation a little bit more heavily. But for now I think we're going to share slides back up and have a bit of a community discussion. And let's go to the next slide. And the hope here is to really have a conversation with everyone in attendance, and kind of hear from you your thoughts, as it relates to these 4 questions. They'll look familiar. They are versions of what were in the pre-survey for the registration. But we just saw a great response, and I have a lot of your responses up, and I'm ready to kind of speak on them and talk to them. But I'd love to hear and offer the opportunity for those that are interested to raise their hand and share some of the information that they'd love to kind of express, and then also have the opportunity to use the chat as a place to moderate conversation. Okay. And one of the things I'd really like to make sure is that we've bring this conversation into these 4 questions. I know we have a lot of conversations about kind of the effects on outside of essential services and accessibility and civic engagement. So let's make sure that we can bring it into these conversations. So, Renee, you are now available to unmute. Thank you. I really appreciate what you said, Mr. Elliott, and I wanna contribute a little bit to the group that you're working with this, not physically a disabled, but the mental health community. I happen to be a psychiatrist as well as I…my previous work was in primary care, and I…there's a lot of complexity that's not been known, and that's been a concern of mine. As I have been doing, you know, my work to try to inform educators in like we get continuing medical education and what I've been seeing is a push toward pharma and a lack of willingness to disclose the things I've been trying to explain which is there's a cellular basis, you know, that we have, and in our bodies, both cellular and electrical, and some of the population that are now expressing a lot more what they're calling mental health problems and giving a stigma to that population and saying it's you that have the problem and here's a medication, where the sad thing to me is in the last 3 years, particularly when I've been doing national meetings, and I've been doing way more than the normal amount of CME that was required to try to get the people that are speaking, to inform the current group of physicians nurses, and nurse practitioners, mental health workers, and people like yourself, who are trying to help them, that it's not all in their head and these things that are being done…there are good things, benefits to them, you know, having the accessibility, as you said, it's been very helpful, but there are safer ways to do it. And instead, it's been, you know, pushed on them without giving them the knowledge that when they're having these meetings, how to protect yourself not only from your router, but from the fact that your own physician and provider, or counselor may not know that there's these inflammatory signals that are disrupting the brain. The brain has a voltage gated calcium channels, central nervous system does…it's the most prolific area that's disrupted and there's a doctor of biochemistry named Martin Paul, who's written…well, it's in PubMed, but there's just been a severe lack of knowledge about this and it's causing, you know, whether it's children or people

with attention problems to have problems, people with dementia, people are having cognitive problems developing sleep problems. All that's really well delineated by some of the work that he's presented, which are review articles. And we who are trying to protect the public as both psychiatrists and physicians and scientists, the group called physicians for safe technology, I only came across 3 years ago at a national…Renee? Yeah, but you need to know that. We're trying to keep things around 2 minutes so we have an opportunity for everyone. Yep, okay, so I just want you to…I want you to be aware then, when when you're speaking to the group, that you're speaking with, which really needs you, it always has been lovely when I've seen people who are physically challenged, having, you know, people that have mental health challenges really appreciate you and and I know that…that's a…you're…you will be a wonderful, sincere helper. Thank you, Renee. But please be aware of that. Yeah, I wanted…I wanna thank you that you become aware of this, and I'd be happy to put it in the chat. But please be aware that you…it's been a very difficult uphill battle, and I hope that California, you know, it's one person at a time we can't keep stigmatizing people and and having them think that it's their problem because they have to be on on a meeting with someone that they are having, you know, problems with adapting to. It's not their problem. It's the lack of information. So that's what I wanted to transfer. Thank you. Thank you very much, Renee. And now we're gonna move on to Mario. Mario, you can unmute. Hello! My name is Mario Moro. I'm a licensed child care provider here in the City of Long Beach, and I guess pertaining to question number one, I wanna say is just having that access again, regurgitating a lot of the information that's been put out there. It's just having access to knowledge and resources as a childcare provider during COVID. We've seen a lot of resources that were handed out for us to support us as family childcare providers and also families. But unfortunately, sometimes getting that information was either kind of really stressful in regards to parents, again, having that language barrier or having that technology barrier. And so having that…obviously it would kind of give the turnaround for these programs that we're getting…offering. But since these programs or we weren't aware of them, we weren't able to offer them or people weren't able to have access because they didn't know how to access things digitally and stuff like that. And so again, and moving forward, and with this conversation I would also want to be more part of in getting involved within this like I said, as I was hearing earlier, you know, there was other meetings about this. And so this is my first time hearing about this being offered it so again, goes to show that you know we're having some of these barriers in regards to digital having access because a lot of the access there's a lot of stuff that's out there or information that's put out there but however, you know, there's not really organized, and I think that's where we should kind of also focus on stuff like that. And that'd be all. Thank you. Yeah, thank you, Mario, and that brings a great point of some of one of the things that I think this is essential services, accessibility, and civic partition group can address, which is trusted partners and community based organizations. And how we can leverage each other to ensure that accessibility as more digital services go online can share those resources. So I have absolutely agree, and I heard you and I appreciate your comment, Mario. Yeah, thank

you. And we look forward to joining and being part of these more often. Yeah, appreciate it. Wendy, you can…shoot, press the wrong button, Wendy, give me 1 second. Okay, Wendy, you can unmute. Hello, everyone. So I think a key question is, what are considered essential to services? So here's one. Okay. So SNAP, EBT, formally known as food stamps. Okay, there is currently…you can order groceries through only 2 venues here in San Francisco. Or maybe it's the state of California. It's only Walmart or Amazon, and I would like to see other vendors, you know, other than Walmart and Amazon, and see more outreach to merchants who can, okay, you know, do that kind of stuff, you know, to connect to the existing infrastructure such as instcart or they have the fruit and vegetable boxes that can be delivered to the home and stuff like that. So another thing that I was suggesting is that some years ago – this, this is in the chat, okay – I was charging my laptop at a senior center, because, you know, battery juice doesn't last very long on a laptop. And so people came over and asked me when I was doing, because they were curious. And eventually what that led to is that people are asking me, well, how do they do this? Or how do they do that? Or…and stuff? And I wanna suggest that what we need is a…is to put people in the community such as senior centers and libraries and stuff like that to make it more accessible, so that people can build trust over time. And they can compute together whether it as looking at Youtube or other things like that and so that people can learn from each other. In my perfect world, I would be able to go to a co-working space and be able to have other people that will, you know, that can either help me or I can help them do whatever, you know, share knowledge. But it would be open on evenings and weekends, you know, until, like 9 o'clock at night. Anyways, that's my feedback. Thank you. Thank you, thank you, Wendy. And I see there's a lot of good conversation happening in the chat, and I'm hoping that I can either have Brian share out and verbally kind of share with everyone a resource that's available that was used by the California Department of Aging, and then also Ronaldo Gill. If there's a way that your community has been working with cyber security skills with digital literacy rates and I'd love to kinda hear on both of your thoughts, on either of those. Yeah certainly, Cole, yeah, just wanted to make, you know, talking about access. And I know that language is such an important part of that, you know, with CDA we partnered with our…we contract with AT&T to access not…they have a language service that we pay for as well as a, and this is something that state programs you may be considering creating their programs can consider to be some of those language service needs, we contracted them for a language services line, so that when people call they can speak to someone in their language. And there's quite a few languages they provide like some hundred something, I believe languages or more, as well as people can call the help desk to not only set up their device, but they can also help them set up the device in their preferred language, so that's something that we really wanted to take every step to make sure that the people who participate in our program have the ability to do so, you know. We also have a digital connections…part of our digital connections program allows for a a connectivity fund for the area agencies on aging, and they can use those funds to purchase screen readers, and magnifiers, and speech recognition software, refreshable

braille displays, transcription software, head pointers, joysticks, you know, those types of accessible devices that older adults and adults with disabilities need in order to really be able to utilize those those devices to their to their best ability. So thanks for allowing me the opportunity to share that, Cole. No, thank you, Brian, appreciate it. And there's actually a really interesting conversation happening, as it relates to ASL interpretation, but also the term they use is monolingual, which, meaning blind to Deaf. And one of the things that I found as we are putting together webinars that were accessible is a comment that Christina left, which is, if you go to the 3 dots and the toolbar at the bottom where it says more and the captions, there is option for those closed captions to be in an…but I think it's about 12 to 18 alternate languages. And so, yeah, that is something that's super interesting and a tool that's available right here that we can also use and be shared. So, Christina thanks for calling that out in the chat. I'm gonna leave room for one more speaker or two more speakers if they're interested. I really am interested in Ronaldo, and what he's sharing in terms of the bilingual cyber security skills program for contractors. Definitely look forward to hearing more from you, Renaldo, in the future, and following up on your program and he's just agreeing with chat version of language, communication. So completely agree. Looks like we got one more hand. So we'll go ahead and, Walter, you can unmute. Yes, hi! This is the fifth of these State sponsored sessions that I've listened to, and I think the thing that is kind of missing is the…is the structural implications that comes with with the digital transformation. And by that I mean, I guess what I like to ask everyone, and I might write it as a comment to the State at some point is, can you envision your, your agency being totally decentralized? And it's like schools should be looking at delivering their curriculum to…we're building a neighbor center to take care of that. But what if telehealth and distance education, and all of these services we're talking about today were put into the neighborhood as opposed to having neighbors go to these various remote locations. That's the gift of broadband, in my opinion, is the ability to descentralize out of the facilities that you require everyone come to and to bring them all together in one facility that everybody can find in the middle of their neighborhood so I just throw that out as a observation and wonder if anybody would like to respond. Well, Walter, I can sort of respond. Prior to this position, I worked for the County of Tuolumne, which is a rural county in the central Sierra, and this is actually one major issue that that came up which was a central location outside of like an elk lodge or community center, where everyone can find each other in an emergency or in the time of needing some sort of communication and yeah. So I think that's a really solid idea in terms of this idea of resilience and community and something that could be discussed in future outcome area working groups. So thank you for your comment, and I wrap that up, cause I'm realizing we now need to jump to the next phase of our conversation, which is about the public survey and DEEM tool that's coming up so I'm gonna go ahead and have next slide. And introduce Rachna to step in and share some more information from the Broadband Equity Partnership. Thank you so much, Cole. Hi everyone, I'm Rachna Vas. I work for Broadband Equity Partnership, and we are advisors, program advisors, and consultants to the California Department of Technology. We are assisting with the State

digital equity plan. I just wanted to touch base with everyone, next slide, about the public surveys that are being disseminated statewide. There are 2 surveys coming your way. One of them targets, organizations, entities, community based organizations, faith based organizations, and that's called the DEEM tool: the digital equity ecosystem mapping tool. And then there is the Digital Equity Public survey that targets California households. The public survey is meant to identify digital equity barriers faced by Californians as it relates to broadband accessibility, affordability, and adoption. This public survey is available in multiple languages, and it is actually enhanced with audio capabilities, so that participants can actually click on audio files to hear the language that the survey…being asked in their language, so questions will be asked in the intonation that many participants are used to. The survey was also created with a number of accessibility features incorporated to make this widely accessible and available for use and thanks in large part to the Department of Rehabilitation for helping us with that, and to Alex Elliott for helping us with that process as well. So this public survey is to be released in the coming weeks. We intend to make paper surveys available as well during our local and regional events. So please stay tuned more to come and we'll have more information on the Broadband for All website. Next slide. The other survey that I mentioned is the Digital Equity Ecosystem Mapping tool, which is an asset inventory of programs, plans, and services being offered throughout the State. This tool is specifically for organizations and entities that leverage technology to provide a program or service to Californians. The tool is available in English and Spanish. It is now live. We're dropping in the chat…can the survey be retooled to be done via text? The link is available and can be accessed via text. But the survey is a bit large, and the purpose of the survey…and one of the questions in the chat is whether or not we can actually make this text accessible, so I just want to respond that this survey is meant to collect large quantities of information from organizations. So your program plans, your program descriptions, if you are engaging in collecting broadband data, we would love those shape files, any information and data that you've already collected, that you think is applicable or helps inform the State in its preparation of the State digital equity plan. That's the kind of data that we're looking for, and we'd love for you to be able to share that in a manner that works online. So we actually have the email address where you can actually send your files to. It's called DEEM: deem@state.ca.gov, and the tool, as I said, is completely accessible right now. So please go ahead and complete this tool if you're an organization or if you leverage technology to help your customers, your consumers, your patients, leverage technology for any service. Next slide. We have an outreach toolkit that we created for everyone. We know that many of you work with other entities, other agencies, and other groups in your work. So please push out this link to all of your partner channels your partner networks, your partner entities that may include community based organizations, or faith-based groups that also help Californians access technology for a variety of programs and services. So use this toolkit and please let us know, please give us any information, any feedback we'd love to hear from you. Next slide. In your toolkit, you will see a flyer that actually has a QR code to make it easy to scan and just begin entering the information that you need to

about your programs. So please share this out, please push this out statewide. The more we hear from you, the greater our understanding of what's really being offered throughout California and where the resource gaps may be. So thank you for helping us in this initiative, and with that I'll turn it over to Cole. Thank you, Rachna. So I'm gonna share. Yeah, next slide, the next steps and the ways to get involved. So if you're interested to continue this conversation, to continue to voice your thoughts and your expertise, the best way to get information on kind of steps, what's going on, what's the progress is to sign up for the updates on the Broadband For All portal. It is both here on this slide, but also in the chat, where you can click some links. Additionally, as Rachna and just shared, we would love for you to complete the digital equity ecosystem mapping tool, which is that DEEM tool. Again, it's sharing information from an organizational perspective, all the different programs and resources in your community. So please do it yourself, and also share it with those organizations that you know in your network. Then, for on the more personal level please complete and share the digital equity public survey. You can share it with your friends and family. Again, that will be upcoming soon. And finally there's 2 other ways you can join: there's more outcome area working groups. This is, like I said, the second in our essential services, accessibility, and civic participation working group, there's additionally the Statewide planning group, and finally starting in April and running through the summer there's going to be local events in communities near you, and you'll be able to find more information on the Broadband For All portal and or on the events page of the Broadband For All portal. Next slide. Next, I'd like to pass the mic off to Gladys of the NTIA who's our federal program manager and helps us on the federal side. Gladys? Thanks Cole. Hi everyone, my name is Gladys Palpallatoc. I'm from the NTIA. I am, as Cole mentioned the federal program…one of the federal program officers or FPO's for for California. And so I'm working with the CDT team on the digital equity program. I'm here to just share something that you may already have seen: NTIA is about to release, you know, in this quarter two additional notice of funding opportunities, NOFOs, for the next phase programs after the planning phase. And so we are soliciting your input and your organization's input on those notice of funding opportunities so that we can, we can deliver a better, a better program. So the first…one of the programs is the state digital equity capacity grant program, which will be applied for and then administered by the State of California. And so you can see information there on the slide and the other program will be in parallel. The competitive digital equity program, which will be administered by NTIA for implementation of our…for digital inclusion and equity programs. I should mention that the State digital equity capacity program will be implementation of the State digital equity plan that you all are now giving input into for. The submission deadline is 5 pm Eastern time on May first. You can submit comments in several ways, one of which is in the will be included in the slide there: online, by mail and by email. So in more than one way to get your comments in. If you have any questions or your organization has questions, please contact me. My contact information is there on the slide, and I'm gonna put all of this in the chat as well, so you can start taking a look now. Thanks Cole, and back to you. Thank you very much

Gladys, and thank you for sharing that information and sharing that important opportunity to share some more comments as it relates to digital equity. Next slide. So these are the next steps as an outcome area working group. Next slide. As we start to move forward and incorporate the information, the conversations that you're sharing, we're gonna start to develop strategies as a group that align with our State digital equity plan, so SDEP, priorities, as informed also by the public survey, and those digital equity ecosystem mapping tool information. As a group, we're gonna do a gap analysis and really start to assess and understand what's missing and finally, we're gonna do research, we're going to evaluate assets and then develop those recommendations that then, from our outcome area working group, the essential services, civic participation and accessibility, get added and wrapped into the State digital equity plan. So a lot of work to come and a lot of really fun conversations to be had. Next slide. And finally, the next March outcome of…this was the March outcome area working group meeting, and the next essential services, accessibility, and civic engagement outcome area working group meeting will be on May 18th at 1 to 2:30, and we're gonna address how digital equity programs, which ones are currently working in your community and what's missing? So it'll kind of be a…in parallel to some of the information that we're looking at potentially and talking about going forward that's in the survey. And then in June you'll see that we can start talking about more of that information. So thank you for your continued engagement in participation in the State digital equity planning efforts. There will be a slide included with all of our contact information. And again the recording, the transcript, the audio file, the slide deck will all be found at the Broadband For All portal online, which are links available throughout the chat and the survey. Thank you. Have a great day.