

# Rockingham County

## Digital Inclusion Listening Sessions Report -

August 2025 | Prepared by NC 100

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### I. Executive Summary

#### Vision

Every Rockingham County resident deserves reliable, affordable internet access, access to devices, and the skills to thrive in today's digital world. NC 100 and Rockingham County Digital Coalition are committed to closing the digital divide through collaboration, investment, and community-driven solutions.

**The Rockingham County Digital Inclusion Coalition** was formed to develop a strategic plan for expanding reliable, affordable, high-speed internet access while ensuring residents have the hardware, tools, and skills needed to thrive in today's digital world. Their vision is for **all Rockingham County residents** to fully participate in society, democracy, and the economy – regardless of socioeconomic status.

After receiving an award from [NC DIT](#) for supporting collective actions for community service to develop or expand digital opportunity projects to address at least one or more of the following elements:

- Affordability of reliable high-speed internet
- Provision of internet-enabled devices (computer, laptops, etc.) that meet users' needs
- Access to digital literacy and skills training
- Quality technical support

**NC 100**, on behalf of the coalition convened in person, virtually, and via electronic survey was charged with a mission to:

1. *Gather insights about the specific challenges in accessing reliable and affordable broadband and digital services*
  2. *Learn about the digital tools, resources, and services that the community values most.*
  3. *Highlight existing community assets, organizations, and potential partnerships that could support digital equity initiatives.*
  4. Use the feedback gathered to inform the development of a strategic plan or roadmap for addressing digital equity challenges
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## **What We Did**

- **5 Listening Sessions (Oct 2024 - Jan 2025)**
    - 3 in-person, 2 virtual
    - Over 90% of participants from Reidsville, Stoneville, Eden
    - 39% Black, 42% White, 11% Hispanic/Latine
    - 56% women, 40% older adults
  - 65 Service Providers Surveyed across education, healthcare, nonprofits, and local government
  - Conducted a series of follow-up interviews with various stakeholders to enhance the formal listening sessions
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## **ABOUT NC 100:**

**NC 100** is a social enterprise working alongside local, regional, and statewide leaders committed to authentic acts of community service. Our vision is to help create a community where all residents have full access to the resources and relationships that support, protect, and inspire wealth creation and healthy outcomes.

NC 100 partners with community stakeholders to develop and coordinate programs and services across multiple sectors. We cultivate coalitions of like-minded organizations that support young people, amplify community voice, and build organizational and community capacity.

Our work is supported by a blend of private donors, fee-for-service engagements, and foundation grants – including from the **Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, the Southern Coalition for Southern Justice, the Southern Partners Fund, Cone Health**, and the **Reidsville Area Foundation**.

Our **Theory of Change** holds that by serving as conveners, coaches, facilitators, connectors, documenters, and consensus-builders, we can help Rockingham County and surrounding communities access the resources needed for economic and social well-being.

### **NC 100's Core Engagement Strategies:**

1. **Relationship Building:** Foster authentic relationships and build on existing community assets.
2. **Community Mobilization:** Bring together individuals, associations, and institutions to advance wealth-building and economic opportunity.
3. **Capacity Building:** Prioritize support for organizations led by Black Americans or those focused on marginalized communities (Black, Latino/a/x, rural, low wealth).

### **NC 100's Guiding Values:**

- **Accessibility:** Everyone should have access to robust broadband and the knowledge to engage fully.
- **Affordability:** Internet access should not be determined by income.
- **Dependability:** Solutions must be reliable, sustainable, and future proof.
- **Equity:** Digital opportunity must transcend background or circumstance.
- **Consistency:** The coalition will provide stable leadership to advance cutting-edge digital solutions.

### **Facilitation Approach:**

- **Full Participation:** Everyone's voice matters; dialogue is open and inclusive.
- **Equal Representation:** No idea is prioritized over another; all views are documented.

## **II. Purpose & Need for Digital Inclusion Listening Sessions**

The **Digital Inclusion Listening Sessions** were designed to gather insights from local communities about digital equity, access, and use. The coalition facilitated safe, inclusive spaces for dialogue to better understand barriers, strengths, and opportunities.



#### AGENDA

- ® **10:15am- Welcome and Context**
- 10:30am- Questions and Discussion**
- 11:30 AM: Q&A**
- 11:45AM: Wrap up and Next Steps**
  - Take/Share our survey/evaluation
  - What's next?
- 12PM: Close**

#### Session Overview:

- **5 total sessions:** 3 in-person, 2 virtual
- Conducted across Rockingham County between October 2024 and January 2025
- Participants included diverse voices – residents, community leaders, and service providers

#### Objectives:

- **Identify Barriers** to digital access (cost, availability, infrastructure, literacy)
- **Understanding Community Needs** for tools, resources, and services
- **Highlight Key Partners** and assets to advance digital equity
- **Develop a Roadmap** to guide future coalition actions

### NC 100: Facilitation Team

#### Our Values:

##### Full participation:

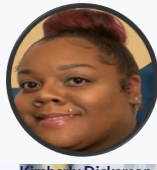
We use tools to encourage all members to speak up and say what's on their minds, "giving the permission to be messy."

##### All Voices:

We do not show preference to one idea over another, but rather use tools to equally document all views, noting points of both consensus and disagreement.



Cordell Gibson



Kimberly Dickerson



Merald Holloway





### Key Populations for engagement:

- Low-income households
- Older adults
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with language barriers
- Racial and ethnic minority groups

## III. About the Listening Sessions

### a. SESSION DETAILS

Session	Date	Format	Location	Participant Highlights
1	Oct 30, 2024	Virtual	–	Predominantly Black/African American; ages 38–73
2	Dec 14, 2024	Virtual	–	Predominantly Black; ages 19–59
3	Dec 28, 2024	In-Person	Eden Library	Hispanic and Black participants; teens to older adults; majority male
4	Jan 18, 2025	In-Person	New Reidsville Housing Authority	Predominantly Black, female-identifying; ages 26–70
5	Jan 29, 2025	In-Person	Sharon Community Outreach Center	Diverse community members

**INSIGHT:** Over **90% of attendees** came from Reidsville, Stoneville, and Eden—suggesting that perspectives from smaller towns or rural areas of the county may be underrepresented.

**INSIGHT:** The listening sessions drew a racially diverse group of participants, with strong representation from both **Black (39%) and White (42%)** community members. Hispanic/Latine participants accounted for 11%, indicating that this community had a presence in the sessions but may still be an opportunity area for deeper outreach and engagement.

**INSIGHT: 56% of participants** in the listening sessions were female. The gender distribution may offer opportunities to explore how digital access, literacy, and barriers may differ by gender – for example, in relation to caregiving roles, employment patterns, or technology use.

**INSIGHT:** Older Adults Are Strongly Represented. A significant portion of participants (40%) were born **before 1964**. This highlights that older adults—who often face greater digital access and literacy barriers—were highly engaged in these discussions.

**INSIGHT:** Diverse Age Representation Across Generations. The sessions included participation from a wide age range:

- Baby Boomers and older (40%)
- Gen X (24%)
- Millennials (19%)
- Gen Z and younger (17%)

This generational diversity suggests that digital inclusion is a cross-generational concern in the county.

**INSIGHT:** Potential Priorities for Digital Inclusion Efforts

Given the strong presence of older adults, digital equity strategies may need to prioritize Digital literacy training for seniors, Accessible devices and user-friendly platforms & Tech support services tailored to older users.

**INSIGHT:** Engagement of Younger Voices. **While younger adults (born after 1997)** were less represented (17%), their participation is still notable and signals interest in shaping digital futures. There may be opportunities to further engage youth and young adults as digital navigators, ambassadors, or co-creators of solutions.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM DISCUSSION

### **1. Access to Affordable Internet: Barriers Identified (Cost, Availability, Infrastructure):**

- Persistent dead zones and poor connectivity in rural and remote areas
- High cost of broadband services, data plans, and initial connection fees
- Lack of fiber infrastructure and limited access to infrastructure data hinders service expansion
- Federal broadband maps overestimate coverage due to flawed census block reporting
- Even service providers face connectivity issues when hosting visitors
- 46.6% of survey respondents reported having no wired internet; 80.1% cited unavailability as the main reason

### **2. Devices and Technology Access:**

- Common Device Gaps (Smartphones vs. Laptops, etc.):
- Many rely solely on smartphones, which are not sufficient for work, school, or telehealth
- Lack of laptops or tablets, particularly among low-income families, seniors, and students
- Housing program residents often lack access to personal devices, limiting opportunity
- Repair/Replacement Issues:
- Devices may be outdated or broken, with limited options for repair or replacement
- Affordability of new technology is a persistent barrier, especially for low-income individuals

### **3. Digital Skills and Literacy:**

- Training Needs (Basic Skills, Job Readiness, Telehealth, etc.):
- Community members need support with:
  1. Basic digital skills (navigating forms, using browsers, email)
  2. Job readiness tools (resumes, applications, job searches)
  3. Accessing telehealth and patient portals
  4. Using social media or online platforms to stay informed

### **4. Trusted Institutions for Learning (Libraries, Schools, Nonprofits):**

- Libraries
- Public schools
- Nonprofits
- Senior centers and faith-based organizations

- Participants expressed interest in accessible, culturally appropriate training

### **5. Support Needs:**

- Need for Digital Navigators or Tech Support:
- Strong demand for local digital navigators to help with:
  1. *Completing online forms*
  2. *Troubleshooting devices*
  3. *Guiding residents through platforms and tools*
- Role of Community Hubs (e.g., Churches, Senior Centers):
- Community hubs like churches, recreation centers, and senior centers are ideal places for:
  1. *Offering in-person support*
  2. *Hosting tech clinics or learning sessions*
  3. *Reaching residents who are reluctant or unable to seek help online*

### **6. Trust, Privacy, and Language Accessibility:**

- Concerns About Scams, Online Safety, and Government Use of Data:
- Many community members, especially older adults, are fearful of scams and data misuse
- Concerns about how personal information is handled on government or health platforms

### **7. Language and Accessibility Barriers:**

- Need for multilingual tech training and materials
- Lack of accessible formats for those with disabilities or limited literacy
- Some services, like housing applications, are online-only, excluding those without digital access or skills.

### **8. Differences Across Communities:**

- Geographic Gaps: Rural residents face more severe infrastructure barriers.
- Demographic Gaps: Older adults and Latinx residents face additional language and skills barriers.
- Youth: Disparities in device ownership and stable internet access affect learning outcomes.

### **9. Local Innovations:**

- Partnerships between Rockingham Community College and other institutions
- Use of libraries and housing authorities as access points

## **10. Aspirations:**

- County-wide reliable internet access
- Community-led digital training
- Affordable devices for all residents

## **11. Community-Proposed Solutions:**

1. Expand rural broadband infrastructure with better coordination and transparency
2. Provide affordable or subsidized internet options
3. Use community broadband mapping and self-reported data to guide investments
4. Encourage public-private partnerships to improve infrastructure:
  - i. Local device loan or donation programs
  - ii. Expanded digital skills training through trusted local organizations
  - iii. Permanent broadband expansion to underserved areas
  - iv. More community digital navigators
  - v. Enhanced public awareness of available programs and resources

## **RECURRING THEMES SHARED FROM DISCUSSION:**

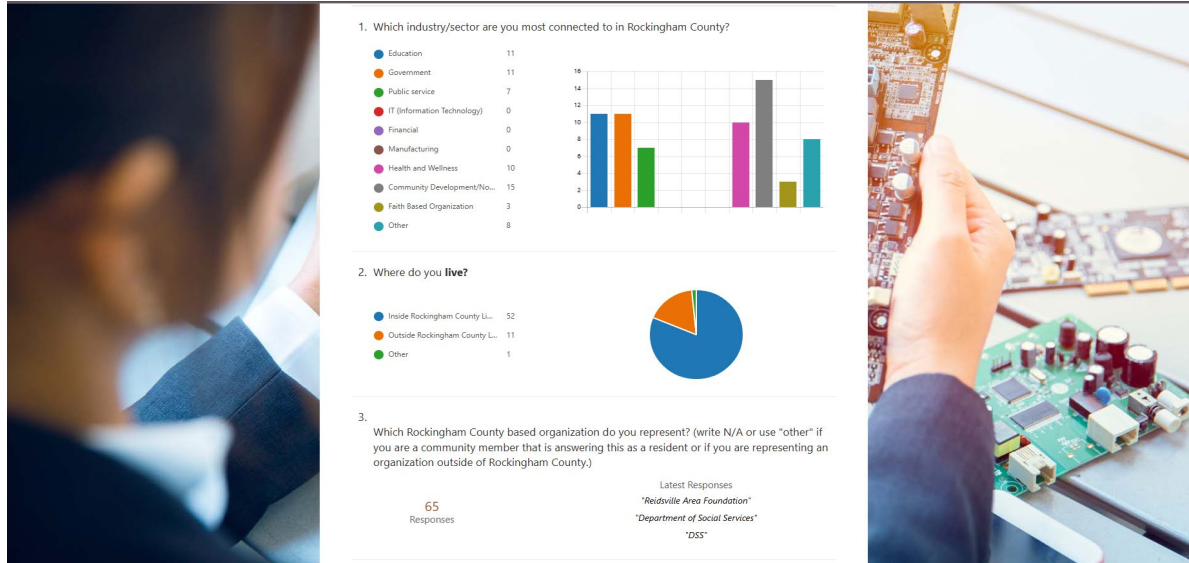
- The community continues to face significant digital access and literacy barriers, including:
  - Dead zones and lack of reliable internet, especially in remote areas.
  - Limited access to devices beyond smartphones.
  - Affordability of internet service and technology.
  - Digital literacy gaps, especially among older adults and students whose families may also lack access.
  - Awareness of available community services and digital resources remains low.
  - Resistance to digital adoption, with some individuals hesitant or unable to engage in digital training.
  - Transportation barriers limit in-person digital learning opportunities.
  - Challenges during remote learning days, particularly for those without stable internet or devices.
  - Agencies are using digital forms but note many community members still require in-person or assisted support to access online services.
- Issues with fiber connectivity to buildings and limited infrastructure information hinder service expansion.
- Even service providers experience connectivity problems when hosting visitors.
- Limited or expensive data plans and connectivity access.

**RECURRING THEMES SHARED FROM DISCUSSION:**

- Lack of devices and affordable internet, especially for low-income individuals.
  - Low digital literacy and lack of user knowledge, particularly among older adults.
  - Difficulty accessing online forms, social media, and telehealth services.
  - Health care access barriers due to lack of technology or comfort with devices.
  - Residents in housing programs face digital access barriers that hinder their personal growth and opportunities.
  - Some services, like housing applications, being online-only prevent participation from those without digital skills or resources.
  - Even when the internet is available, cost and device ownership remain major obstacles.
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## IV. Feedback Outside of Sessions



### CONTEXT:

In January of 2025, NC 100 launched a coordinated effort to gather input from resource providers, nonprofit leaders, and human services stakeholders to deepen our understanding of digital inclusion needs and opportunities with a digital survey that closed on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2025. While we were actively conducting in-person community engagement sessions to hear directly from residents about their experiences with broadband access, digital literacy, and online services, we recognize that those delivering vital support services hold valuable insights into the barriers and gaps facing the people they serve. This companion survey helped capture provider perspectives on infrastructure, affordability, digital skills training, and system-level coordination challenges.

By engaging both community members and service providers, NC 100 aimed to paint a more complete picture of the digital divide and surface practical solutions that can inform local investment, policy decisions, and programming. **65 organizations**/individuals responded to this survey.

To better understand the landscape of digital service delivery and to identify actionable strategies for closing these gaps, NC 100 engaged via online survey with Rockingham County resource providers to learn from their experiences.

### Specifically, we aimed to:

1. Gather providers' perspectives on the current state of digital access and inclusion among the populations they serve.
2. Explore the methods and tools providers are using to offer remote or virtual services, especially in response to increasing demand for digital options.

3. Identify strengths, challenges, and innovations in remote service delivery that could inform broader efforts to improve digital equity countywide.

Full survey results can be [found HERE](#)

## Respondent Profiles:

- **Top sectors:** Community Development (15%), Education/Government (11%), Health & Wellness (10%)
- **Residency:** 52% live in Rockingham County

*A wide range of organizations from across Rockingham County participated in the digital inclusion listening sessions, representing sectors such as education, healthcare, faith-based organizations, local government, nonprofits, and community services. Key partners and stakeholders include:*

### **Government & Education:**

1. Rockingham County Government
2. Rockingham County Board of Education
3. Rockingham County Schools & Parent Resource Centers
4. Rockingham County Planning Committee for Older Adults
5. Rockingham Community College (RCC)
6. Rockingham County Education Foundation
7. Health & Human Services:
8. UNC Health Rockingham
9. UNC Health & UNC Cancer Care at Rockingham
10. Rockingham County Health Department
11. Care Connect
12. Ancora Compassionate Care
13. The Free Clinic of Rockingham County

### **Nonprofits & Community Organizations:**

1. NC 100
2. Believers In You Incorporated
3. Resilient Trails Network
4. REMMSCO Recovery Houses
5. Reidsville Outreach Center
6. LOT 2540
7. Reidsville Area Foundation
8. Eden Chamber of Commerce
9. Rockingham County Arts Council
10. Rockingham Pregnancy Care Center
11. Help Incorporated: Center Against Violence
12. The Salvation Army of Rockingham and Caswell Counties
13. Faith-Based & Community Centers:

14. Sharon Baptist
15. St. Thomas Episcopal Church
16. Cornerstone CC & Icon Universal
17. Recreation & Fitness:
18. Madison-Mayodan Recreation Department
19. Lifestyle Fitness & Tennis
20. Rockingham County YMCA

### **Housing:**

1. New Reidsville Housing Authority

## **Respondent Findings:**

### **a. Digital Proficiency:**

- **Above average:** 33%
- **Average:** 22%
- **Very basic:** 3%

### **b. Device Access:**

- 40% reported clients sometimes lack device access
- 21% say clients have reliable internet access

### **c. Digital Literacy:**

- 26% report clients struggle with basic skills
- 30% see moderate literacy levels

### **d. Insights about Community Conditions (based on feedback)**

- a. Persistent & Overlapping Barriers
- b. Internet Access → Not just about "availability" – cost, reliability, and mapping inaccuracies are huge issues.
- c. Device Gaps → Smartphones alone won't close the digital divide.
- d. Digital Literacy → Both basic skills and confidence are major gaps.
- e. Trust & Privacy → Fear of scams and misuse of personal data is widespread, especially for older adults.
- f. Layered Disparities. Geography matters → Rural zones of adequate wi-fi access outside of Reidsville and Eden city limits are still much worse off (dead zones, outdated infrastructure).

- g. Demographics matter → Older adults, low-income families, and residents of public housing face overlapping challenges in language, devices, trust, skills, and cost barriers.
  - h. Youth → Students without stable home internet fall behind in school.
  - i. Mismatch of Service Delivery: More services moving online (housing applications, health portals)
  - j. Residents often lack sufficient devices, skills, or internet, Still need human support for digital access, and face language and disability-related barriers
  - k. Gaps or Areas for Further Exploration. Youth (under 18) voices were not captured as much as we would have liked, as well as Spanish-speaking residents.
  - l. Households in Rockingham County face persistent digital divides driven by:
    - Cost
    - Infrastructure gaps
    - Digital literacy barriers
  - m. **COVID-19** exacerbated these inequities. As a **Tier One County** (one of NC's most economically distressed), addressing digital inclusion is vital for long-term prosperity.
  - n. **Federal vs. Local Data Gap:** U.S. Census reports 98.1% access – but survey data shows **46.6% lack wired internet**.
  - o. **Contributing Factors:**
    - 61.9% of county residents are rural.
    - 95% of internet service gaps occur in rural areas.
    - Federal maps overestimate actual connectivity.
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## Suggested Next Steps for the Coalition:

### 1 Immediate

- Disseminate these findings **widely** (to city/county leadership, housing authorities, libraries, schools, funders).
- Share results back to the **community members** who participated.

### 2 Short-Term Projects

- Begin **pilot digital navigator** program through trusted hubs.
- Launch more **device donation/loan programs**.
- Advocate for **more accurate broadband mapping** using self-reported data.

### 3 Longer-Term

- Partner with NC DIT and SPECTRUM to coordinate **broadband expansion** plans.
- Fund **permanent, culturally appropriate digital literacy classes** at local hubs.
- Advocate for **ACP like programs**.



## HIGH LEVEL RECOMENDATIONS:

### Digital Navigator Support: Building Community Confidence

- Provide consistent training sessions that build lasting digital skills.
- Shift one-time assistance into structured pathways that grow residents' confidence to use technology independently.

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### Partnerships: Meeting Organizations Where They Are

- Actively engage partners to co-design solutions that integrate digital access into their programs.
- Coordinate services and foster collaborations that strengthen community resources.
- Support organizations in embedding digital equity practices into their daily operations.

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## Ecosystem Growth: Broadening Reach, Strengthening Roots

- Expand collective initiatives that connect organizations and residents.
- Invest in strategies that increase participation and deepen community impact.
- Build a resilient, interconnected digital equity ecosystem across Rockingham County.

## Closing Statement

NC 100 is deeply grateful for the trust placed in us by the Rockingham County Digital Inclusion Coalition. Your commitment to building a future where every resident can access reliable, affordable, high-speed internet—and the tools and skills needed to use it—made this work possible. By engaging us to conduct listening sessions across the county, you affirmed the belief that all people, regardless of socioeconomic status, deserve the opportunity to fully participate in society, democracy, and the economy.

Together, we have laid the groundwork for a strategic plan that reflects the voices of Rockingham County residents and charts a clear path toward digital equity. NC 100 is proud to stand alongside the Coalition and the community in this shared vision for a more connected, resilient, and thriving future.

On behalf of our staff and board of directors, we humbly offer this report for the community.

Best,

Merald B. Holloway



**Merald Holloway**  
**CEO, NC 100**

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[JOIN THE NC 100 Champions and RockCo Alumni Database TODAY](#)

We invite you to a...

# DIGITAL EQUITY

## VIRTUAL SESSION

**100**

**Wednesday, October 30**  
6:00 P.M.

**Registration Required**

What is the purpose?  
This is a virtual session for anyone who lives, works, worships, or goes to school in Rockingham County. This session will discuss digital equity planning for the Rockingham County Digital Inclusion Coalition.

**SCAN ME!**



Topics for discussion:

- 1 Identify Barriers to Digital Access
- 2 Understand Community Needs and Priorities
- 3 Identify Key Resources and Resources
- 4 Develop a Roadmap for Action

Let your

# BROADBAND & DIGITAL EQUITY MATTER

We are supporting community members in Rockingham and surrounding counties with internet, computer, device, and digital navigation.

**EDUCATE & ENROLL SUPPORT DEVICE NEEDS**

**NC 100**



Join us for a...

# Rockingham County

## Digital Inclusion Planning & Community Input Meetings

**SATURDAY**  
January 25, 2025

**The New Residence Housing Authority Community Room**  
104 3rd Ave.  
Roxboro, NC 27573

**10am - 12pm**

**REGISTER TODAY! SPACES LIMITED!**



**Who Can Sign up?**  
Anyone who lives, works, worships, or goes to school in Rockingham County.

This session will inform digital equity planning for the Rockingham County Digital Inclusion Coalition.

**NC 100**

# Rockingham County

## Digital Inclusion Planning & Community Input Meetings

**WEDNESDAY**  
JANUARY 29, 2025

**10AM-12PM**

If you live, work, worship, or go to school in Rockingham County, we want to hear from YOU!

This in-person session will inform digital equity planning for the Rockingham County Digital Inclusion Coalition.

**SHARON COMMUNITY OUTREACH CENTER**  
136 Denton Loop,  
Beverly, NC 27916



**NC 100**

