

# The NC 100 Digital Program and Opportunity Playbook

**Grounded in Community. Built for Action.**

Learnings from the 2025 Digital Equity Network convened by Rural LISC and NC 100

**1 Centering People, Not Programs**

**2 Customization Over Standardization**

**3 Service Excellence as Advocacy**

**4 Service Excellence as Advocacy**

**5 Navigating Scarcity with Collaboration**

**6 Civic Participation and Public Access**

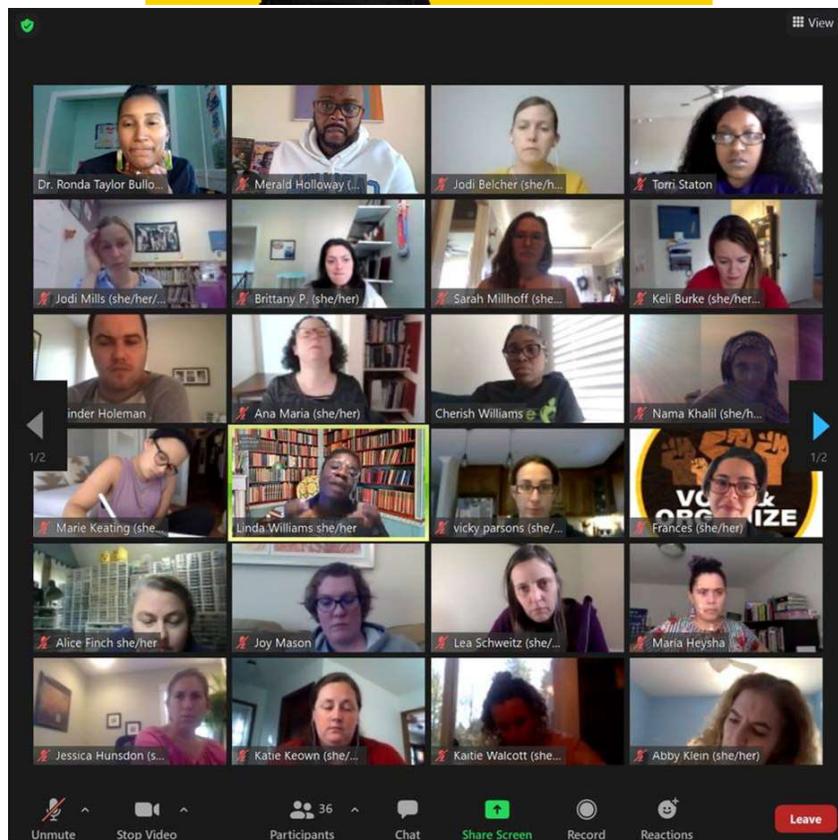
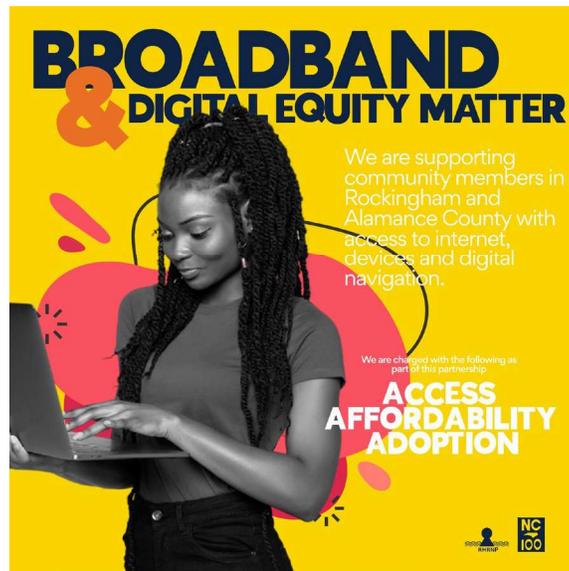
**7 Education Continuity and Lifelong Learning**

**NC 100**

• We're all advocates—whether we call ourselves that or not.  
• "Technology is only equitable when empathy leads."  
• We can't be everything for everyone.

**KEY FUNDING HOOKS FOR 2025:**

- Digital Equity Competitive Grants
- Internet Society Foundation
- Connected Communities Mobile Literacy
- Regional Digital Inclusion Grants



## How to Use This Playbook

This Playbook is designed to be used, adapted, and shared—not shelved.

### For Practitioners

- Strengthen digital literacy, navigation, and access programs
- Train staff and peer navigators using shared principles and best practices
- Improve customer service and follow-up as part of digital advocacy
- Align digital work with workforce, health, education, and civic goals

**Suggested Use:**

- Pull sections directly into staff trainings or onboarding
- Use the Best Practices table as a program design checklist
- Apply the narrative frames when preparing grant proposals or reports

**For Funders and Partners**

- Understand what effective, community-centered digital work looks like in practice
- Assess proposals through a lens of trust, relevance, and collaboration
- Identify opportunities to align funding across sectors rather than in silos

**Suggested Use:**

- Reference the Priority Narratives section when shaping RFPs or investment strategies
- Use the language shifts to communicate digital investments to boards and stakeholders

**For Networks and Coalitions**

- Establish shared language and expectations across partners
- Support peer learning and coordinated advocacy
- Maintain continuity as staff, funding, and programs evolve

This Playbook works best when treated as a living document—revisited, updated, and strengthened through continued collaboration.

## About This Playbook

This Playbook is designed as a practical tool for nonprofit professionals, public-sector partners, and community-based leaders advancing digital opportunity in rural and small-town communities.

It reflects collective learning from a 2025 series of conversations with nonprofit professionals organized by Rural LISC, in partnership with NC 100, and members of the Digital Equity Network. The insights here are not theoretical—they are rooted in lived experience, frontline service delivery, and shared experimentation.

### **This Playbook can be used to:**

- Improve digital literacy and navigation programs
- Strengthen funding and advocacy strategies
- Align partners across workforce, health, education, and civic systems
- Build resilient, people-centered digital opportunity infrastructure

## About NC 100



NC 100 ([www.nc-100.org](http://www.nc-100.org)) is a social enterprise working alongside local, regional, and statewide leaders committed to authentic acts of community service.

### **Our Vision**

A community where all residents have full access to the resources and relationships that support, protect, and inspire wealth creation and healthy outcomes.

### **What We Do**

NC 100 partners with community stakeholders to develop and coordinate programs and services across multiple sectors. We cultivate coalitions that:

- Support young people
- Amplify community voice
- Build organizational and community capacity

### **How Our Work Is Supported**

- Private donors
- Fee-for-service engagements
- Foundation grants, including support from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, Southern Coalition for Social Justice, Southern Partners Fund, Cone Health, and Reidsville Area Foundation

### **Theory of Change**

By serving as conveners, coaches, facilitators, connectors, documenters, and consensus-builders, NC 100 helps Rockingham County and surrounding communities access the resources needed for economic and social well-being.

## NC 100 Core Engagement Strategies

- Relationship Building - Foster authentic relationships and build on existing community assets
- Community Mobilization - Bring together individuals, associations, and institutions to advance wealth-building and economic opportunity
- Capacity Building - Prioritize organizations led by Black leaders and those serving marginalized communities (Black, Latino/a/x, rural, low-wealth)

## Guiding Values for Digital Opportunity

- Accessibility - Everyone deserves broadband access and the skills to use it
- 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 - Stable leadership is essential to advancing cutting-edge digital solutions

## Facilitation & Network Approach

- Full Participation - Every voice matters; dialogue is open and inclusive
- Equal Representation - No idea is prioritized over another; all perspectives are documented



## What We Learned in Conversation

### 1. Centering People, Not Programs

Digital inclusion begins with relationships, not curricula or funding requirements.

#### Key Insights

- Meet people where they are—not where systems expect them to be
- “Warm handoffs” and consistent follow-up signal dignity and respect
- Trusted messengers are the backbone of sustainable digital equity

#### Trusted Messengers Include:

- Digital navigators
- Peer and youth coaches
- Librarians
- Faith leaders

*“Technology is only equitable when empathy leads.”*

## Centering People, Not Programs

- Digital inclusion begins with relationships—meeting people where they are, not where institutions expect them to be. Trusted messengers such as digital navigators, librarians, and faith leaders are the backbone of sustainable digital equity.
- “Warm handoffs” and consistent follow-up signal dignity and care in service delivery.
- Trusted messengers—digital navigators, peer coaches, librarians, and faith leaders—form the backbone of sustainable digital equity work.



## 2. Customization Over Standardization

Standardized curricula often fail to meet community needs.

### What Works Best

- Embedding digital skills into real-life goals (healthcare, jobs, benefits)
- Micro-learning and one-on-one troubleshooting
- Partnerships with libraries, schools, and Cooperative Extension

### Key Takeaway

Relevance equals retention. Digital skills stick when they solve real problems.



### **3. Service Excellence as Advocacy**

Customer service is not separate from advocacy—it is advocacy.

#### **Insights from Participants**

- Deep listening reveals systemic barriers
- Responding to frustration builds trust and legitimacy
- “Doing good work loudly” strengthens policy and funding influence

*“We’re all advocates—whether we call ourselves that or not.”*

### **4. Navigating Scarcity with Collaboration**

Shrinking funding streams are a shared reality.

#### **What Emerged**

- Collaboration is both a coping mechanism and a resilience strategy
- Shared resource libraries reduce duplication
- Coordinated advocacy amplifies impact

*“We can’t be everything for everyone, but we can be part of something larger.”*



## 5. Designing for Accessibility

### and Learning Differences

Digital inclusion requires intentional design for people with learning disabilities and cognitive differences.

#### Design Principles

- Plain language
- Multiple formats (visual, audio, hands-on)
- Flexible pacing
- One-on-one support when possible

Accessibility is not an add-on—it is foundational.

## Best Practices Highlighted

Focus Area	Best Practice	Real World Service Example
Customer Service Excellence	Define a shared service standard (“North Star”)	Delta (responsiveness), Regions Bank (personal touch), Costco (consistency)
Digital Literacy Delivery	Embed skills in broader case management	Workforce agencies integrating tech into job readiness
Peer & Youth Models	Engage students as peer navigators	Alamance County has great models
Resource Leveraging	Curate trusted digital tools	GCF Global, AT&T ScreenReady, YouTube
Advocacy Framing	Treat advocacy as education and storytelling	Sharing local data with funders and policymakers
Systems Thinking	Focus on systemic solutions	Shifting away from individual blame

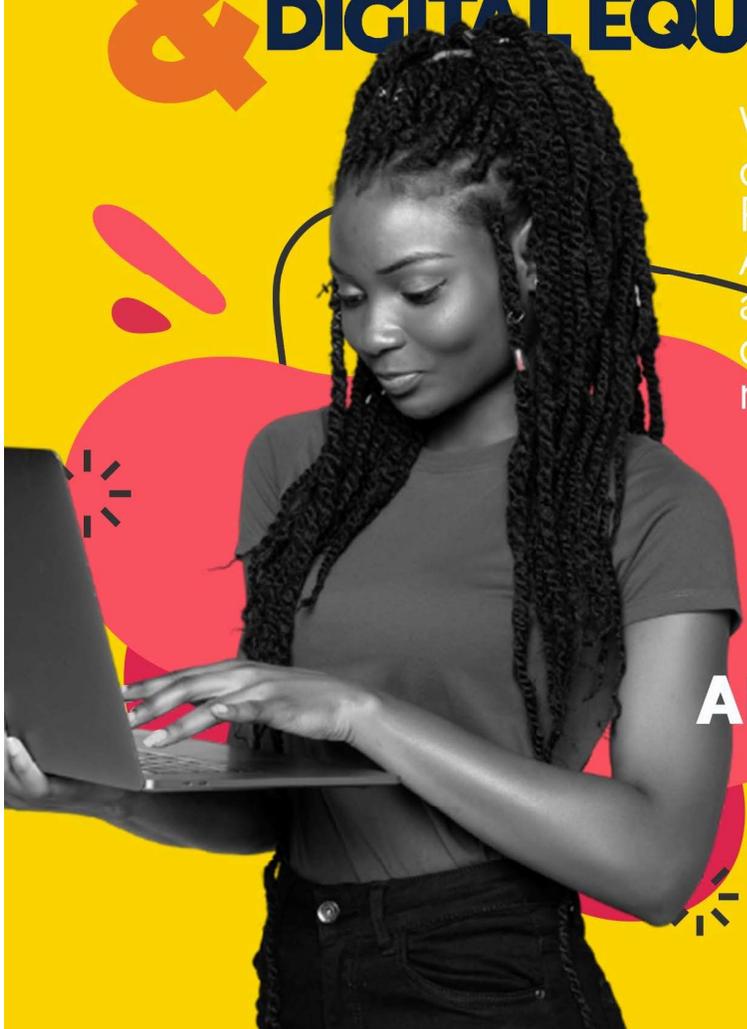


### HEALTHY AND THRIVING ORGANIZATIONS HAVE:



<p><b>PROGRAMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clear goals &amp; measurable outcomes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Proven impact</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accountable, trained staff with room to grow</li> </ul>	<p><b>FUNDING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aligned with mission &amp; community</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Balanced mix: grants, donors, entrepreneurial</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In-Kind counts 😊</li> </ul>
<p><b>NETWORKS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Participants, leaders &amp; funders who value the work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Intersectional partnerships that amplify impact</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Value-based storytelling that connects all audiences</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEADERSHIP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Onboarded &amp; accountable board/staff</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Skilled, supported, and team-oriented</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Trusted judgment and willingness to compromise</li> </ul>

# BROADBAND & DIGITAL EQUITY MATTER



We are supporting community members in Rockingham and Alamance County with access to internet, devices and digital navigation.

We are charged with the following as part of this partnership

**ACCESS  
AFFORDABILITY  
ADOPTION**



## Storytelling as Strategy

### Using Data as Storytelling

#### Quantitative Data Should Be:

- Understandable
- Accessible
- Timely
- Localized
- Boiled down to what matters most

#### Qualitative Data Should Be:

- Emotionally resonant
- Community-centered
- Anchored in quotes and images
- Memorable and human

Data becomes powerful when it maintains connection to people.

## Navigating Scarcity with Collaboration

1. DIY (Do It Yourself)
2. Partnering with Government
3. Partnering with Private Entities
4. Influence

### LINKS TO PATHWAY BRIEFERS:



DUKE  
FUQUA

 **CASE**  
Smart Impact Capital  
**CASE**

NC  
100

## NATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### American Library Association + Simple Mobile “Connected Communities” Grants:

\$8,000 per site for mobile-focused literacy programs and toolkits.

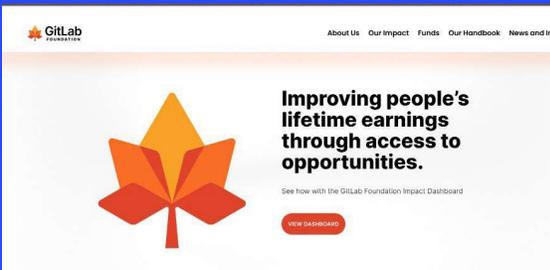


### Internet Society Foundation:

Grants for U.S. and global initiatives equipping youth and communities with ethical digital skills.



## NATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



# Priority Narratives for Funding & Advocacy

## 1. Workforce Readiness & Talent Pipeline

Core Message: Digital skills are essential for modern work and economic competitiveness.

### Funding Hooks

- WIOA
- U.S. Department of Labor programs
- Workforce boards
- Chambers and economic development entities

Language Shift: Talent development, upskilling, career readiness

## 2. Health Access & Digital Navigation

Core Message: Digital skills are now a prerequisite for healthcare access.

### Funding Hooks

- Hospital Community Benefit dollars
- HRSA and AHEC
- Medicaid innovation
- Rural health foundations

Language Shift: Patient access, care coordination

## 3. Community Resilience & Preparedness

Core Message: Digital readiness strengthens household and community resilience.

### Funding Hooks

- FEMA
- USDA Rural Development
- Infrastructure reinvestment

Language Shift: Preparedness, safety, continuity

## 4. Local Business Growth & Entrepreneurship

Core Message: Digital tools are lifelines for small businesses.

### Funding Hooks

- SBA Community Navigator
- CDFIs and Chambers

- Corporate philanthropy

Language Shift: Market access, digital business skills

## **5. Civic Participation & Public Access**

Core Message: Digital access enables civic participation and efficient government.

### **Funding Hooks**

- Local and state innovation funds
- Libraries and Extension
- Community foundations

Language Shift: Access to services, digital public infrastructure

## **6. Education Continuity & Lifelong Learning**

Core Message: Digital skills underpin learning across the lifespan.

### **Funding Hooks**

- Community colleges
- Adult education
- Workforce re-entry programs

Language Shift: Learning pathways, family engagement

## **7. Regional Collaboration & Smart Growth**

Core Message: Digital opportunity is a growth strategy.

### **Funding Hooks**

- EDA
- Councils of Government
- Regional public-private coalitions

Language Shift: Regional competitiveness, smart growth

## Practical Tip for the Community of Practice

Frame your work as Digital Opportunity Infrastructure—an umbrella that integrates:

- Workforce mobility
- Access to essential services
- Regional competitiveness
- Community resilience

## Looking Ahead: Network Priorities

### **Opportunities for the Network in 2026:**

- Synthesize Learning into Action - Identify 2-3 shared collective asks
- Showcase Models - Spotlight embedded digital literacy and partnerships
- Sustain the Network - Explore shared platforms, calendars, and check-ins
- Exchange Resources - Maintain a living resource library
- Celebrate Progress - Honor the work and relationships built

## As we depart...

This Playbook is an invitation to continue learning together, acting collectively, and centering people in every digital solution.

Digital opportunity work succeeds when trust, relevance, and collaboration are treated as core infrastructure—not side benefits.

NC 100 is deeply grateful for the trust placed in us to join you in your efforts. 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—make a real difference.

Together, you can lay the groundwork for a strategic plan that charts a clear path toward digital equity.

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

