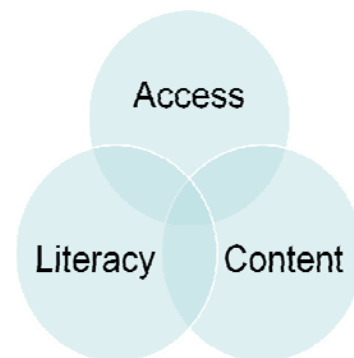


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## Defining Digital Inclusion for Broadband Deployment & Adoption

Fully realizing the potential of broadband requires an understanding of the digital divide and a strategy to ensure full deployment and adoption. “Digital inclusion” is the positive response to closing the divide. Meaningful inclusion efforts require more than simply computer ownership or deploying Internet service nearby. Digital Inclusion encompasses three areas: **Access, technology literacy,** and relevant **content** and services. Inclusion seeks equity for all residents, as well as small businesses and community-based (non-profit) organizations. The three areas include these components:

1. Access
  - a. Connectivity to the Internet
  - b. End user equipment: hardware and software, including tools for people with disabilities.
  - c. Access to technical support
2. Technology literacy/competency
  - a. Skills required to utilize the equipment and Internet effectively for essential services, education, employment, civic engagement and cultural participation.
3. Relevant online content and services
  - a. Services available for those in need
  - b. Culturally and educationally appropriate design
  - c. Marketing and placement appropriate to reach underserved communities
  - d. Enabling of content production and distribution by lower capacity residents, businesses and organizations.



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Digital Inclusion/community technology programs level the playing field of opportunity for technology underserved or vulnerable populations<sup>1</sup>, those who are behind others in access to and use of information and communications technologies. These include low-income or low-literacy residents, residents of rural communities, seniors, people with disabilities, at-risk youth, immigrants/refugees and people of color as well as small disadvantaged businesses and non-profit organizations.

Programs are usually provided by non-profit or public agencies in community settings. These may be youth and community centers, small business and workforce training centers, immigrant and refugee organizations, low-income housing, libraries or schools opened for community programs.

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<sup>1</sup> In the US National Broadband Plan, vulnerable populations is a term used to refer to people and “technology underserved” refers to areas with less broadband infrastructure. In other places the terms are used more broadly. Washington State adopted an abbreviated definition of community technology and digital inclusion in 2008 (Public Law 6438-S2)