Organized Advocacy: The Need for Local Coalitions and State Networks

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TEXAS BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

ILSR INSTITUTE FOR Local Self-Reliance

HR&A

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Topic Overview
- The Purpose, Outcomes, and Process
- An Alliance or Coalition = Collective Action and Collaboration
- The How-To, Challenges, Tips to Consider
- Digital Opportunity Ecosystem and Potential Members and Stakeholders
- How to Measure Success?
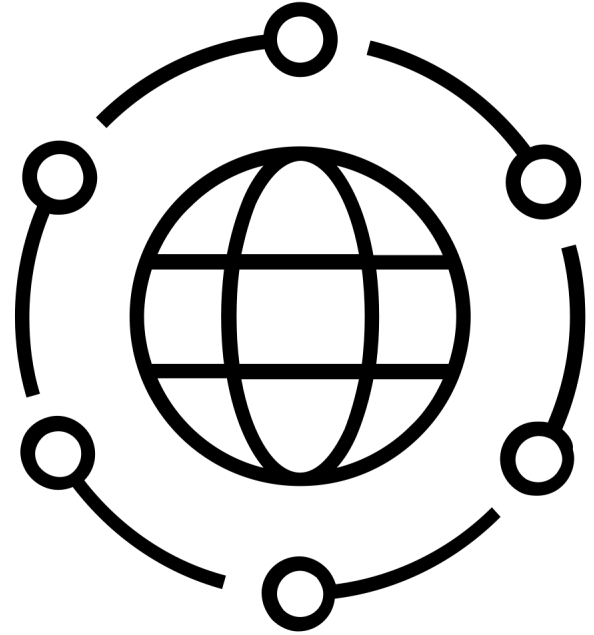- In Texas Everything is Local
- Interactive Breakouts
- Q&A

Topic Overview

- Importance of Organized Advocacy
- Role of Local Coalitions
  - Digital Inclusion Alliance of San Antonio (DIASA)
  - San Antonio Digital Connects
  - Older Adults & Disabilities Working Group
  - Borderplex Connects
- Significance of State Networks
  - Texas Digital Equity Network
  - Connected Nation Texas
  - Digital Texas

The Purpose, Outcomes, and Process

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THE PURPOSE: Local coalitions and state networks center the on-the-ground stories of communities at the forefront of local, state, and federal digital opportunity planning.

The Purpose, Outcomes, and Process

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THE OUTCOMES: Coalitions and networks convene various stakeholders to collaborate on strategies and initiatives to achieve our shared digital opportunity goals.

Models vary in their makeup. Stakeholders may include local government, nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations.

How they engage also varies and can include direct resources, cross sharing of information, democratic decision making, fiscal partnerships to support collaborative efforts.
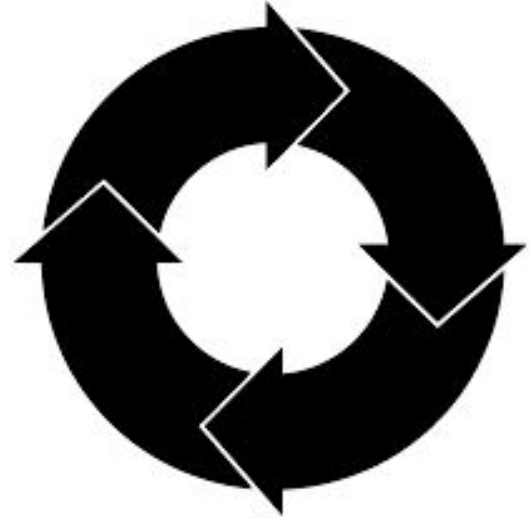
The Purpose, Outcomes, and Process

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THE PROCESS: The process of forming and operating these alliances involves several steps:

- Assessment
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Strategic Planning
- Implementation
- Evaluation and Adaptation

An Alliance or Coalition = Collective Action and Collaboration

Why is collective action and collaboration necessary?

- Success of coalitions and network coordination is closely linked to:
  - Collective decision making
  - Base building
  - Convening community-based and community-serving organizations
  - Tailored solutions
- A community protects what it co-designs and builds together

An Alliance or Coalition = Collective Action and Collaboration

Whether you are a community member, a policymaker, or a digital access provider, there is a place for you in the digital opportunity ecosystem.

- Local, state regulatory advocacy
- Shared narrative and data driven strategy
- Mapping accuracy
- Cross-sectoral coalition building
- People and communities that make space for collaboration and build consensus
- FCC challenges

The How-To

In operating a coalition, key actions are to:

- Build patiently over time
- Consider the advantages and disadvantages of local governments and ISPs in coalition leadership
- Meet regularly
- Establish shared understanding and language
- Embrace an explicitly anti-racist framework

Challenges

Major challenges that coalitions face include:

- Establishing shared language and understanding regarding the coalition's goals, structure, and future direction
- Balancing the coalition's interests and member organizations' interests
- Recruiting new members
- Poor meeting attendance

Source: Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook

Tips To Consider

- Consider hiring paid staff to focus on coalition goals
- Set and maintain a routine for regular and consistent meetings with agendas
- Ask for help from already established coalitions and the NDIA
- Agree on a structure for the coalition, put in writing with a guiding document
- Move at the speed of trust
- Activate the community through coordinated and co-hosted local events

What is a Digital Opportunity Ecosystem?

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A Digital Opportunity Ecosystem is a combination of programs and policies that meet a geographic community's unique and diverse needs. Coordinating entities work together in an ecosystem to address all aspects of the digital divide, including affordable broadband, devices, and skills.

Digital Opportunity Ecosystem Checklist

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✓ Existence of programs and policies addressing all aspects of the digital divide

✓ Affordable and subsidized broadband service options that meet the community's needs

✓ Affordable and subsidized device ownership programs that meet the community's needs

✓ Multilingual digital literacy and digital skill trainings that meet the community's needs

✓ Hardware and software technical support

✓ Digital navigation services to guide residents to the above services

✓ Collaboration: Entities providing local digital inclusion services, policymakers, advocates, social service providers and community leaders co-create solutions in partnership with the community.

Potential Members and Stakeholders

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Who should be involved?

Anyone who will be involved in implementation efforts

People closest to the issue, or individuals and organizations who can explain their timeline of urgency to close the digital divide

People who can build trust, or those individuals who are trusted within their communities

Potential Members and Stakeholders

Recommended partners and stakeholders:

- Community Anchor Institutions
- County and Municipal Governments
- Local Educational Agencies
- Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Entities, or Native Hawaiian Organizations
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Individuals with Disabilities, Including Organizations That Represent Individuals with Disabilities Including Children
- Older Adults Individuals & Organizations
- Organizations That Represent Individuals Who Are English Learners
- Organizations That Represent Individuals Who Have Low Levels of Literacy
- Organizations That Represent Veterans
- Civil Rights Organizations
- Entities That Carry Out Workforce Development Programs
- Agencies of the State That Are Responsible for Administering or Supervising Adult Education/Literacy
- Public Housing Authorities
- State Corrections Department

Source: The NDIA Stakeholder Identification Worksheet and NDIA State Digital Equity Plan identifies up to 30+ Additional stakeholders to identify and engage.

How Do We Measure Success?

- **Increased awareness** of digital opportunity investments and milestones statewide

- **Improved coordination** of local and statewide efforts to implement local digital inclusion strategies to support nonprofits and community-based agencies on the frontlines.

- **Establishment of a network** of digital inclusion stakeholders working together to advance the state's digital equity goals and close the digital divide.

- **More coordinated philanthropic investments** in digital equity goals as identified by the Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP).

In Texas, Everything is Local

Expanding and building the local power of communities centers the on-the-ground stories of communities at the forefront of local, state, and federal digital opportunity planning. Some current examples include:

- Coupon solutions, such as the ACP program
- Low income housing connectivity projects
- No-cost Wi-Fi and gap networks
- Rural, Tribal, and Municipal broadband infrastructure investments

Practical Application
Interactive Breakouts

Group Discussion: Imagine this breakout group is looking to join or start a coalition to support a current or planned project. How would the member organizations represented here contribute their expertise to the coalition's success?

Q&A Session

Please submit your questions in the chat box

After this event concludes, please visit **www.broadbandfortexas.com/tdop** to download the Texas Digital Opportunity Plan, and submit your public comments.

Thank You

If you have any questions about the draft TDOP public comment process, please email **digital.opportunity@cpa.texas.gov**.

Please link to this **online form** to read the TDOP and provide comments.

The BDO is accepting public comments through **Jan. 5, 2024**