

# ADVANCING DIGITAL EQUITY IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

October 28, 2022

## OVERVIEW AND UPDATES

### Background

The current COVID-19 pandemic continues to amplify systemic inequities that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, People of Color, immigrants and refugees, and other vulnerable populations. And digital inclusion goals cannot be achieved when the same inequities keep people from achieving social integration and economic mobility. Around 186,000 households in Washington State do not have internet access in their homes, and 22 percent of those households are within King County. Access to reliable, high-speed internet, a computer, and digital skills training are basic necessities, and the work outlined below is part of an intentional effort by the WDC to advance existing digital literacy strategies in the Regional Strategic Plan and provide concrete solutions to alleviate the growing digital divide.

### Digital Equity Recommendations

#### ***Embed digital equity goals in WDC-funded programs***

Progress to date:

- **Digital Navigator RFP & Award:** On August 18, 2022, a consortium of the WDC, King County Information Technology, and Seattle Information Technology submitted a proposal to the State of Washington Department of Commerce to provide regionally coordinated digital navigator services for residents in Seattle-King County. On September 26, 2022, the WDC was notified that the proposal was approved for funding, and on October 12, the WDC released an [RFQ](#) that will fund 7-10 community-based organizations to provide direct digital navigator services. Awards are anticipated to be announced on November 10<sup>th</sup>.  
**Grant Award:** \$988,505.
- **Statewide Workforce Development Digital Equity Survey:** On July 15, 2022, in partnership with South Central Workforce Council, the WDC launched a survey as part of a collective effort among all 12 local workforce development boards to identify and understand the digital needs in our region. The survey closed on 8/15/2022. *Appendix A* has a summary of the results and the qualitative feedback collected. The results of this survey will help inform regional digital equity efforts and needed workforce investments with a digital equity lens.
- **Digital Needs Assessment Tool:** In efforts to create a coordinated process to assess the digital needs of job seekers and connect individuals to technology resources, the WDC co-designed with frontline staff a Digital Needs Assessment Tool (available in multiple languages). This tool was launched on 8/8/2022 as part of the enrollment process in WIOA-funded programs. *Appendix B* shows how the assessment is being used to measure baseline digital skills and the needs of community members enrolled in WIOA-funded programs.
- **Digital Equity Asset Map:** In July 2022, the WDC released the [Digital Equity Asset Map](#). A project that is part of ongoing collective efforts between the WDC, the City of Seattle, digital equity advocates, CBOs, and the Seattle Public Library to map existing digital literacy resources in the community. This map also serves as an advocacy tool by exposing where resources and investments are lacking in our region.
- **AmeriCorps Digital Literacy Resource Navigators:** In partnership with ESD, Washington State Library, and Seattle Public Library, the WDC has been awarded two digital navigator positions that will help us bridge the digital divide by providing digital skills training at Auburn and Rainier WorkSource sites.