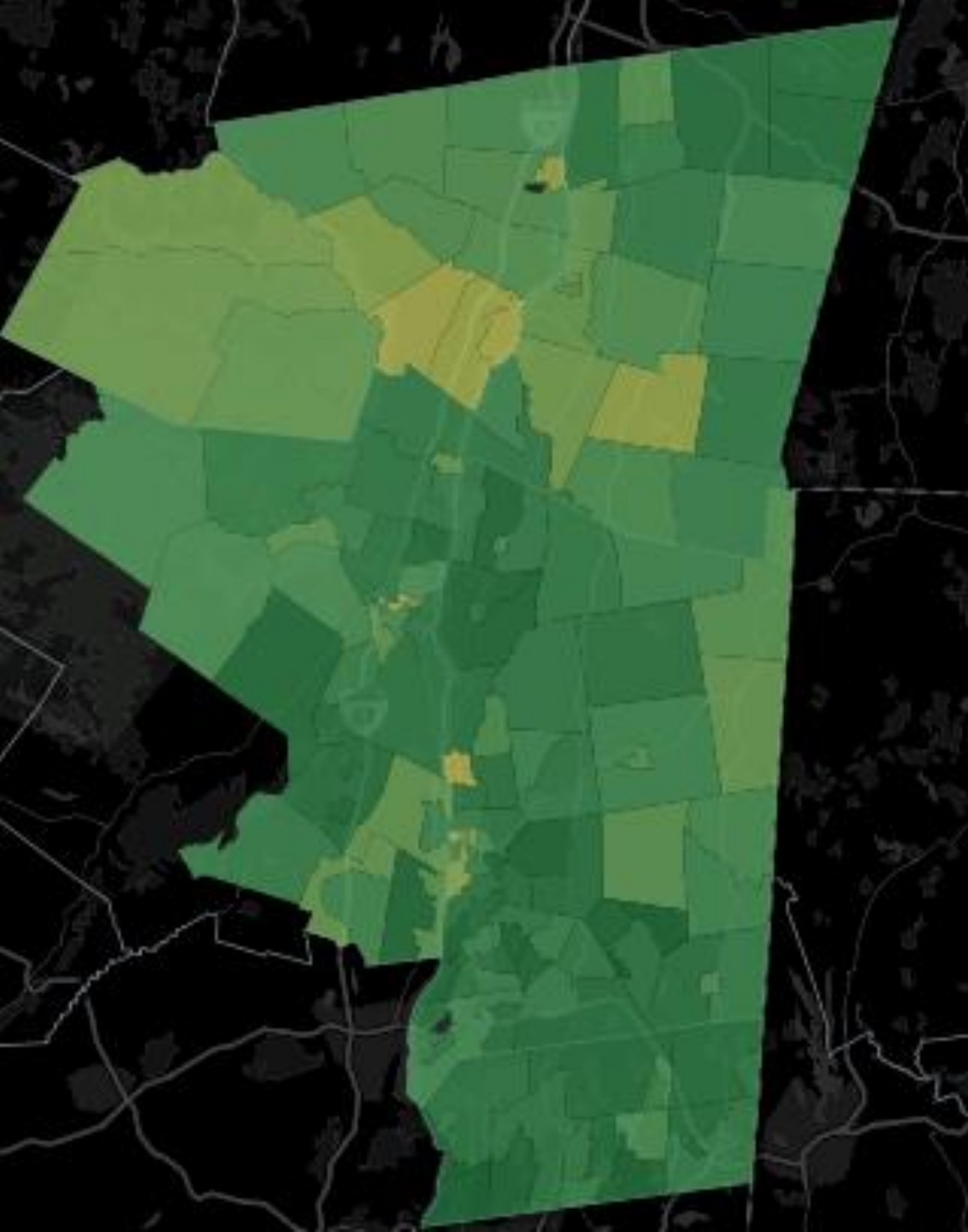




# Digital Equity & Inclusion

MHLS Board Orientation | December 2023

*Presented by Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MHLS Executive Director*



# By the Numbers...

- 11% of households have no internet connection
- 26% do not have a broadband connection
- 40% of households below the poverty line do not have broadband

Source: [NYS Digital Equity Portal](#)

**118,570 children**  
in our system's  
service area  
have  
**no connectivity**  
**at home**





Digital divide is the issue.  
Digital equity is the goal.  
Digital inclusion is the work.



National Digital Inclusion Alliance



# Defined



## Digital Equity = The Goal

“Digital equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for **full participation in our society, democracy, and economy**. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.”

## Digital Inclusion = The Work

1. Affordable, robust broadband internet service;
2. Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user;
3. Access to digital literacy training;
4. Quality technical support; and
5. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.

# MHLS has focused on:

## 1. Broadband as library infrastructure

- Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit **Training & On Demand Consultations**
- Participation in **Connect NY Libraries: A Broadband Improvement Pilot** (Phases 1 & 2)
- Increasing the number of member libraries who are accessing the federal **E-Rate** program

## 2. Increasing public access to broadband connections at member libraries

- Beyond the Library Wi-Fi Project (installing wide area network routers at 44 member libraries)

## 3. Enhancing Digital Literacy Services

- Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley Program



# Improved Connectivity Speeds in MHLS

**30% increase** in the number of member libraries reporting improved connectivity speeds since 2021.

# Connection Speeds



Since its inception in 1997, the E-rate program has helped ensure that eligible schools and libraries have affordable access to the Internet. **Discounts range from 20 to 90 percent** and are based on the poverty level of the schools. Rural schools and libraries may also receive a higher discount.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted the ***E-rate Modernization Order*** on July 11, 2014

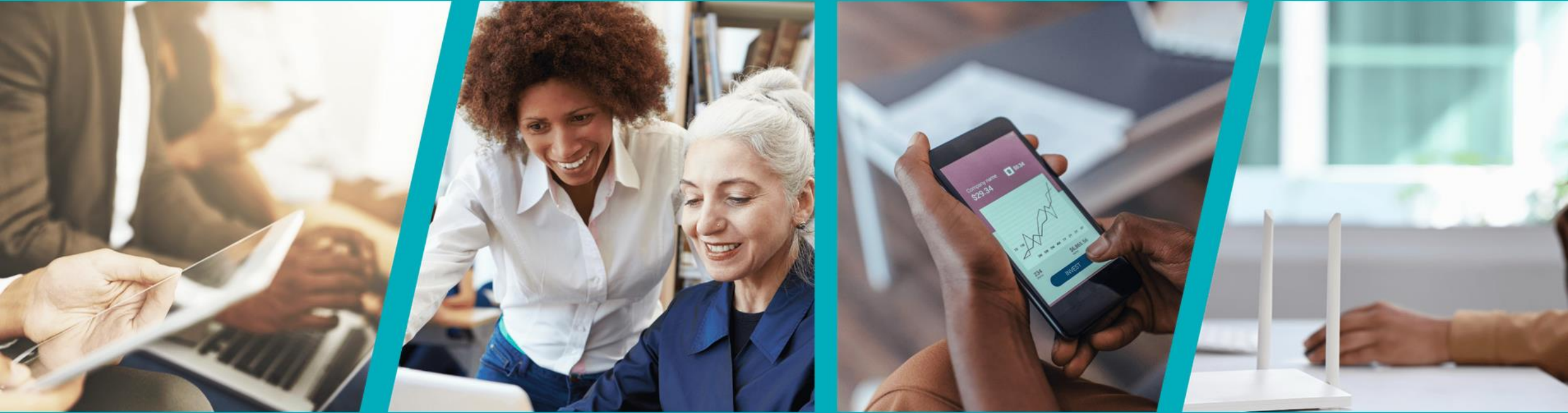
The Order adopts as a bandwidth target the American Library Association's recommendation that **all libraries that serve fewer than 50,000 people have broadband speeds of at least 100 Mbps and all libraries that serve 50,000 people or more have broadband speeds of at least 1 Gbps.**



**52% of MHLS member libraries currently report they do not have the connectivity speed recommended by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the American Library Association**

***Recommended: a minimum of 100 Mbps for serving smaller communities and 1 Gbps for libraries serving populations greater than 50,000 people***

Download Speed	# of Libraries
Less than or equal to 200 kbps	1
Greater than 200 kbps and less than 768 kbps	1
Greater than or equal to 768 kbps and less than 1.5 mbps	4
Greater than or equal to 1.5 mbps and less than 3 mbps	0
Greater than or equal to 3 mbps and less than 6 mbps	1
Greater than or equal to 6 mbps and less than 10 mbps	0
Greater than or equal to 10 mbps and less than 15 mbps	1
Greater than or equal to 15 mbps and less than 25 mbps	1
Greater than or equal to 25 mbps and less than 50 mbps	10
Greater than or equal to 50 mbps and less than 100 mbps	18
Greater than or equal to 100 mbps and less than 1 gbps	30
Greater than or equal to 1 gbps	4
	71



## Digital Navigators Help with Tech Needs

Digital Navigators are trained, trusted guides who help deal with a variety of technology needs. Navigators work in libraries and other community organizations. They assist anyone in need with using a device, securing free or low-cost internet service, and much more. **This service is FREE!**

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## Columbia County

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### Hudson Area Library

51 N. 5th Street, Hudson, NY, 12534

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Paul Costa (518) 828-1792 ext. 103

### Palatine Manor

32 Church Ave, Germantown, NY, 12526

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Wendy Fieser (518) 537-3232

### Philmont Public Library

101 Main St, Philmont, NY, 12565

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Tobi Farley (518) 672-5010

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## Dutchess County

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### Millbrook Library

3 Friendly Lane, Millbrook , NY, 12545

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Gabrielle Esposito (845) 677-3611 ext.103

Jen McCreery (845) 677-3611

### Staatsburg Library

70 Old Post Road, Staatsburg, NY, 12580

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Shaun McCavara (845) 889-4683

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## Greene County

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### Heermance Memorial Library

1 Ely Street, Coxsackie, NY, 12051

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Jennifer Grounds (518) 731-8084

### Mountain Top Library

6093 Main St, Tannersville, NY, 12485

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Jacqueline Elmo (518) 589-5707

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## Putnam County

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### Brewster Public Library

79 Main St, Brewster, NY, 10509

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Jason Vitetta (845) 793-6507

### Mahopac Public Library

668 ROUTE 6, MAHOPAC, NY, 10541

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Emily Wierzbowski (845) 628-2009 ext. 152

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## Ulster County

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### Ellenville Public Library & Museum

40 Center St, Ellenville, NY, 12428-1396

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Joyce Sharpton (845) 647-5530

Nicole Sorbara (845) 647-5530

Carrie-Ann Wood (845) 647-5530

### Elting Memorial Library

93 Main St, New Paltz, NY, 12561-1593

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Kevin O'Leary (845) 255-5030

Deborah Engel-Di Mauro (845) 633-0206

### Plattekill Library

2047 Route 32, Modena, NY, 12548

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Donna Ebanks (845) 883-7286

### Town of Ulster Public Library

860 Ulster Ave, Kingston, NY, 12401

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Joshua Skou (631) 626-0397

### Wallkill Public Library

7 Bona Ventura Ave, Wallkill, NY, 12589

#### Digital Navigator(s):

Kimberly OSullivan (845) 895-3707

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**\$1 Billion in Digital Inclusion  
Investment is Coming in NYS**



# Opportunities:

- “Incorporate tailored digital literacy trainings into public computing center programming such as libraries’ **existing Digital Navigator programs** to address the specific needs of populations like aging individuals, individuals with disabilities, individuals with language barriers, formerly incarcerated individuals, and veterans.”
- “**Invest in physical and digital accessibility** across New York’s public library system. As highlighted throughout this plan, libraries are a key partner in the fight to close the digital divide, so their buildings and websites need to be accessible to all covered populations for CAO to effectively partner with them in identifying and scaling programs as part of the Capacity Grant Program.”





U.S. NEWS

# FCC adopts rules to eliminate 'digital discrimination' for communities with poor internet access

- “Poorer, less white neighborhoods were found to have received lower investment in broadband infrastructure and offered worse deals for internet service than comparatively whiter and higher-income areas.”\*
- Allows the FCC to review and investigate instances of discrimination by broadband providers to different communities based on income, race, ethnicity and other protected classes.

\*<https://apnews.com/article/broadband-internet-speed-inequality-01a99247a08b355e89cc54595aecda>