

Closing Clarksburg's Digital Divide

December 2024



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Town of
Clarksburg
Massachusetts

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Introduction

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, it required communities across the country and in Berkshire County to shift lives, schooling, and work online in ways few could have imagined.

Five years later, many people and organizations have embraced the new opportunities internet access affords – from remote work and telehealth to civic engagement via videoconferencing. Others, however, are still struggling to navigate a more decidedly online world.



Congress observed a divide among people and regions relating to digital access, devices, and skills and, in response, passed the [Infrastructure and Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA)¹ and [Digital Equity Act](#),² which together aim to level the digital playing field – or close the digital divide – by increasing the availability of high-speed broadband service; fostering access to the devices people need to participate in society, regardless of place or position; and expanding opportunities for people to gain digital skills.

The Digital Equity Act focuses on those who, historically, were on the wrong side of the digital divide. They include:

- Older adults
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans
- People with disabilities
- People who belong to historically marginalized racial or ethnic groups
- English language learners
- Low-income residents
- Rural residents

The Commonwealth's broadband agency, the [Massachusetts Broadband Institute](#) (MBI),³ is [overseeing \\$147 million in federal funding](#)⁴ earmarked to expand access to high-speed internet and is slated to deploy \$75 million in American Rescue Plan funds and \$175 million from the state's Capital Project Fund on related broadband projects.

Over the last two years, MBI also provided money to municipalities interested in developing [local digital](#)

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/08/02/updated-fact-sheet-bipartisan-infrastructure-investment-and-jobs-act/>

² <https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/funding-programs/digital-equity-act-programs>

³ <https://broadband.masstech.org/>

⁴ <https://broadband.masstech.org/news/biden-harris-administration-approves-massachusetts-internet-expansion-proposal>

[equity plans](#)⁵ to address their community's unique challenges. After plans are complete, towns are then eligible to access [implementation funds](#)⁶ to address key needs identified through the planning process.

MBI approved the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) to serve as the consultant leading the planning processes in 15 Berkshire County communities, including Clarksburg. BRPC began initial conversations with the town administrator in fall 2023 and officially launched its planning work in May 2024.

BRPC's work encompassed:

- collecting and analyzing demographic data
- surveying residents about their digital needs
- tabling at Clarksburg's 225th Anniversary celebration
- conducting one-on-one interviews with community stakeholders
- hosting a focus group at the Council on Aging
- facilitating a community-wide open meeting

In total, more than 100 residents assisted in developing the plan, which concludes with strategic actions the town and its partners can take to ensure residents benefit from technological advances and internet connectivity figures into town leaders' thinking about long-term economic and social sustainability.

Unless otherwise noted or linked, the data collected for this report derives from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS), Five-year estimates, 2018-2022.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission acknowledges that there are often large margins of errors in federal datasets in smaller communities like Clarksburg, which renders specific data points questionable. However, the ACS is the most reliable source currently available to capture broad demographic, social, and economic trends over time and allows for comparison across communities of similar size and type.



The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission conducted surveying at the town's 225th Anniversary Celebration.

Photo Credit: iBerkshires.com

⁵ <https://broadband.masstech.org/municipal>

⁶ <https://broadband.masstech.org/digital-equity-implementation>

Existing Conditions

Community Overview

Clarksburg is in the Northwest corner of the Commonwealth. It borders Vermont to the north, the city of North Adams to the south, and the towns of Williamstown and Florida to the west and east, respectively. It is a small town with a population of just 1,713.

With 12.8 square miles of land, Clarksburg is the second smallest of 32 cities and towns in Berkshire County in total area. Additionally, the Commonwealth [owns 3,540.11 acres of land in town⁷](#) for conservation purposes, representing nearly half of Clarksburg's total acreage.

The town has few public amenities. It lacks access to public transportation and has limited commercial or non-profit activity. For many services, residents travel to neighboring communities.

The town's limited tax base restricts its ability to enhance services without financial assistance from the state or federal government. The town [operated at \\$27,409 under the tax levy](#) in fiscal year 2024.⁸⁹

To evaluate Clarksburg's demographics and digital needs in comparison to towns of a similar rural nature, the plan uses Stamford, Vt. and Florida, Ma., both geographically adjacent; Whatley and Hinsdale, Ma., which have nearly identical populations; and Erving, Ma., located approximately 50 miles east in Franklin County, which mirrors the town's size and density.

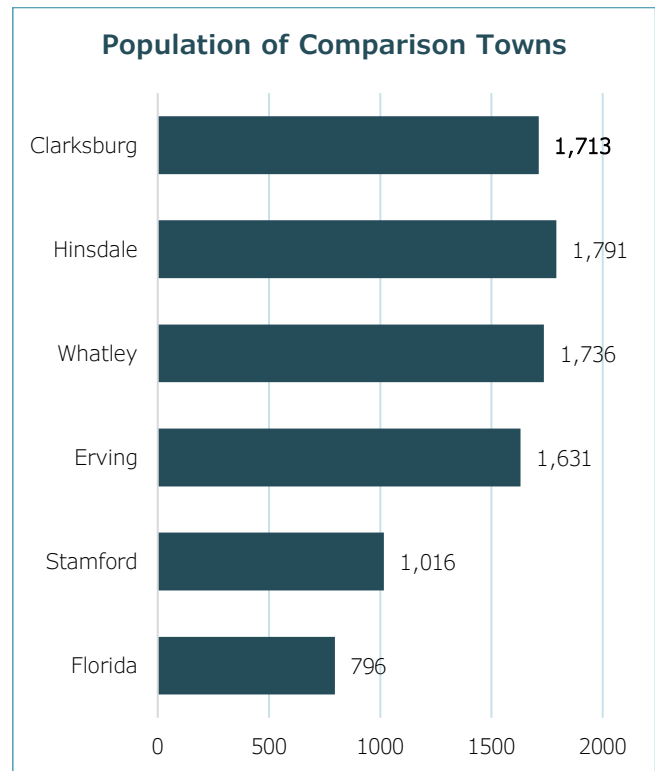


Figure 1: Clarksburg borders Stamford, Vt. and Florida, Ma. and has similar populations to the towns of Whatley, Erving, and Hinsdale as estimated by the ACS.

Covered Populations

Clarksburg's population size, density, and lack of resources (e.g., commuting options, hospital access) means it meets or exceeds the [Massachusetts Office of Rural Health's definition of a Level 2 Rural](#)

⁷ <https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=BLA.StateOwnedLand>

⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/trends-in-excess-levy-capacity>.

⁹ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/state-office-of-rural-health-rural-definition>

[community](#). This also means all town residents qualify as a covered population under the IJA's definition of rural.

Older Adults

Adults over the age of 60 are among the most well-represented (33%) covered population in Clarksburg. The town's median age is significantly older than the Commonwealth (median age: 39.8). Approximately 55% of Clarksburg households include at least one older adult.

Aging communities are a regional trend that similar communities are experiencing. Clarksburg's median age is the second youngest of the comparison towns.

[Older adults tend to experience social isolation at higher rates than younger cohorts \(Gen Z to Baby Boomers\), especially in rural areas](#).¹⁰ They also have more healthcare needs and are [more likely to become disabled as they age](#).¹¹

Technology could address both social isolation and healthcare (e.g., Facebook groups, wearable health monitors; telehealth), yet nationally and locally [older adults are less likely to own smartphones or have broadband](#)¹² because they lack confidence and/or cannot afford service.

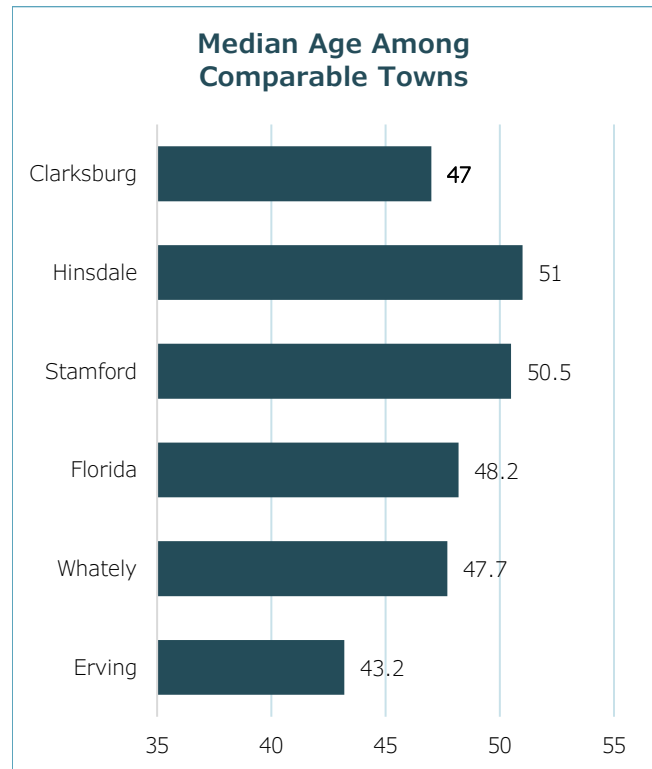


Figure 2: The median age among comparable towns as estimated by the American Community Survey.

People with Disabilities

Approximately 15.4% of Clarksburg residents have a disability, a slightly higher rate than the other towns except Erving (15.9%). The two most frequently experienced disabilities among Clarksburg residents are hearing and ambulatory (movement and walking limitations). People with disabilities can benefit from assistive technologies such as screen readers, which use a website's code to relay text audibly, letting those with vision challenges navigate the internet more easily.

The number of people with disabilities in Clarksburg suggest the town should ensure awareness of and access to assistive technologies by engaging regional partners such as United Cerebral Palsy and the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission.

¹⁰ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2773657>

¹¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/07/24/8-facts-about-americans-with-disabilities/>

¹² <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/01/31/americans-use-of-mobile-technology-and-home-broadband/>

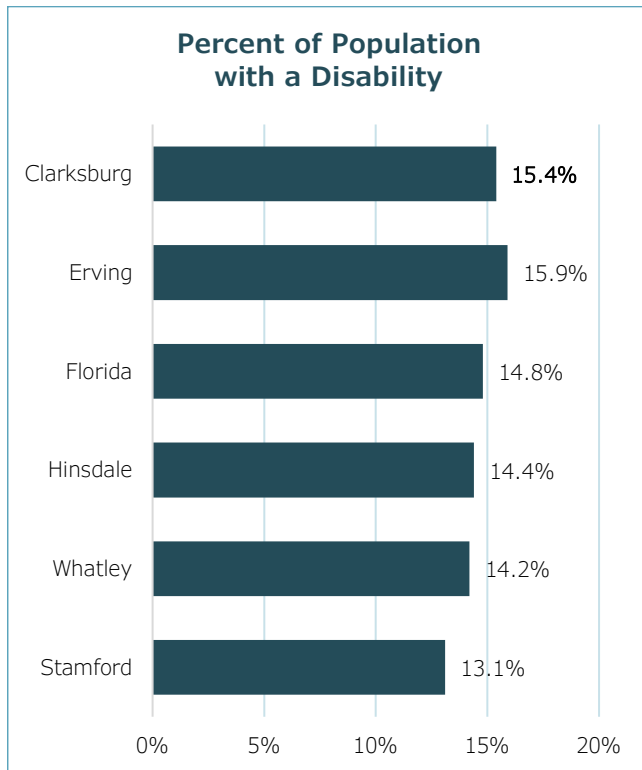


Figure 3: Census estimates of the percentage of the population in comparable towns with a disability.

Web developers have a responsibility to ensure their site's underlying code works with assistive technologies and some create built-in features that allow people with disabilities to alter the screen to suit their needs. Examples include helping people with vision challenges enlarge text and adding subtitles to video content.

The U.S. Department of Justice [recently signed a rule requiring public websites to conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#).¹³ that ensure websites work with assistive devices.

Clarksburg recently completed an evaluation of its town website for WCAG compliance and made most of the required changes.

Members of Racial or Ethnic Minority Groups

Clarksburg's population is predominantly white (98.4%), according to the ACS, with only a small percentage who self-define as Black or African-American (2.2%); American Indian or Alaska Native

(2.2%); Another Race (1.1%); or Asian (< 1%). Approximately 2.2% of residents are of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. *The U.S. Census Bureau also recognizes that it undercounts non-citizens and members of racial or ethnic minority groups, which can affect data accuracy.*

[A report by the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies](#) found that "workers of color are disproportionately affected by digital skill gaps compared to their white peers, in large part due to structural factors that are the product of longstanding inequities in American society, such as income and wealth gaps and uneven access to high-quality K-12 education."¹⁴

While structural factors may affect very few Clarksburg residents now, the town should stay apprised of local and regional resources focused on the digital equity needs of people of color, particularly those located in North Adams, so that residents of color are afforded a broad range of options from which to choose..

English As a Second Language

English is the dominant language spoken at home in Clarksburg with 692 of 715 households speaking English only. Twelve households also speak Spanish; four speak French, Haitian, or Cajun; four speak an

¹³ <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/measuring-the-gap/>

¹⁴ <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/applying-a-racial-equity-lens-to-digital-literacy/>

unspecified language; and three speak an Indo-European language. No households reportedly speak limited English.

A 2019 study by the U.S. Department of Education, [Supporting English Learners through Technology](#)¹⁵, found that a common barrier for English language learners gaining digital literacy skills was lack of digital resources at home.

Veterans

Approximately 4.1% of Clarksburg's population (59 people) served in the armed forces, the majority during the Vietnam era (50.8% or 30 people) and a smaller percentage (18.6 % or 11 people) after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

In the first eight months of the pandemic, veterans organizations nationally saw an [over 200% rise in veterans using telehealth](#)¹⁶, and by February 2021 the U.S. Veterans Administration reported that 77% of all mental health visits by veterans were conducted online. A [survey by the National Institutes of Health](#)¹⁷ found that "most veterans who used telehealth reported...preferring an in-person visit," as compared to "slightly less than half of nonveterans." Veterans were "likely to have more visits when they did use...telehealth," but "reported fewer visits if they were 55 years and older...or lived in a small city."

Given the age of most of Clarksburg's veterans, the town's veteran's agent can be referring clients to the [VA's Telehealth Service](#) for a Digital Divide Consult, which includes connecting them with a social worker and possible access to a free tablet and internet service. This is a particularly powerful resource for which many veterans are not yet taking full advantage.

Formerly Incarcerated

Clarksburg is served by the Northern Berkshire District and Juvenile Courts, both in North Adams, and Berkshire Superior Court, located in Pittsfield. The court sentences individuals to serve at either the Berkshire County House of Correction in Pittsfield or the state prison system, depending on the nature and circumstances of the charges.

The House of Correction incarcerates individuals for up to two-and-a-half years. As of June 22, 2024, the facility's sentenced population was [72 individuals](#)¹⁸, most from Berkshire County; the hometowns of these individuals are not publicly available. The Department of Corrections reports that, as of January 1, 2024, three Clarksburg residents were incarcerated in the state prison system.

[Multiple studies link digital literacy training during incarceration to lower rates of reoffending after release](#).¹⁹

¹⁵ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED600461.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.psychiatry.org/News-room/APA-Blogs/Technology-Role-in-Veterans-Access-to-MH-Services>

¹⁷ <https://www.psychiatry.org/News-room/APA-Blogs/Technology-Role-in-Veterans-Access-to-MH-Services>

¹⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/lists/weekly-inmate-count-2024>

¹⁹ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/digital-literacy-will-reduce-recidivism-in-the-long-term/>

According to [The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security](#), 40.6% of people released from the House of Correction in 2019 were convicted of a new crime within three years. The state prison system has a recidivism rate of 20.8%.

Although Clarksburg has very few individuals in the county's corrections system, advocating for digital literacy training for inmates prior to release could help improve outcomes upon re-entry.

People Living in Poverty

Clarksburg's median household income is \$67,292. Among families, the ACS estimates that 463 have incomes equal to 150% below the poverty line.

While only 1.2% of Clarksburg households receive public cash assistance, approximately 43.1% receive some income from social security; 40.5% earn social security retirement income at an average rate of \$23,962 annually; 6.9% participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the last 12 months; and 6.4% receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at an average rate of \$8,787 annually.

The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassInc) and [the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership \(MACP\)](#) in their 2022 report [Connecting Communities Through Digital Equity](#),²⁰ found that "around 200,000 low-income households in Massachusetts require support in building their digital skills."

In Clarksburg, digital literacy outreach should focus on those struggling financially who are more likely to need guidance and support to build skills that could help improve their economic circumstances.

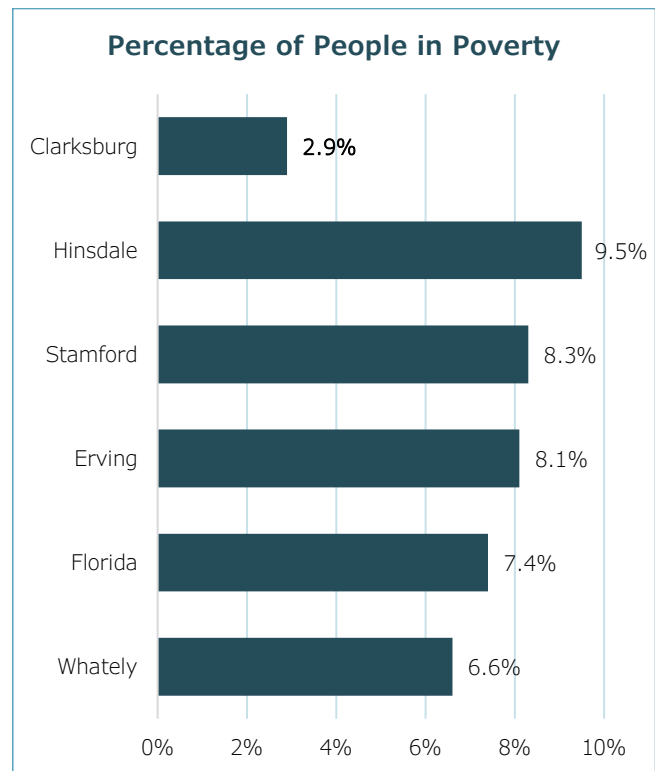


Figure 4: Clarksburg has a lower percentage of people living in poverty than comparable towns as estimated by the American Community Survey.

²⁰ <https://massinc.org/research/connecting-communities-through-digital-equity/>

Digital Equity Indicators

Broadband Coverage

The [Massachusetts Broadband Institute \(MBI\) recognizes 698 Broadband Serviceable Locations](#) (BSLs)²¹ in Clarksburg. BSLs are defined as “a geographical point where fixed broadband internet access can be installed.”²² BSLs are considered “Served,” “Underserved,” or “Unserved.” **Served** addresses can access broadband that meets or exceeds the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) new definition of broadband of 100 Mbps download speed and 20 Mbps upload speed. **Underserved** addresses have access to broadband below 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload but higher than 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload. **Unserved** addresses have access to broadband below 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload.²³

The FCC’s national broadband map shows 693 of Clarksburg’s 698 BSLs as “Served.” Two addresses are shown as Underserved and three are Unserved. To confirm the accuracy of this data, the Commonwealth, through MBI, participated in the [Broadband Equity Access and Deployment \(BEAD\) Challenge](#) in June and July 2024. During that process, MBI accepted one challenge from T-Mobile in Clarksburg, suggesting one additional location is served by fixed-wireless broadband. A final determination about the accuracy of these locations will be released in July 2025.

Internet Providers

As of June 2022, Clarksburg is served by two broadband providers: Charter Communications (Spectrum) and T-Mobile, according to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute. Residents also report having access to satellite internet providers HughesNet and Starlink. Recently Verizon began providing fixed-internet service.

Spectrum offers coaxial broadband with internet speeds up to 1000/35 Mbps ²⁴. T-Mobile is a fixed wireless provider with speeds of 25/3 Mbps.

Spectrum’s highest-tier 1 Gigabit service costs \$114.99 per month. The company’s next-level plan (Internet Ultra) has speeds of 500 Mbps for \$104.99 per month. Spectrum’s lowest-level service provides speeds up to 100 Mbps for \$30.99 per month for income-qualifying households. To qualify, household must receive assistance from the National School Lunch Program, including the Community Eligible Provision, or receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Spectrum [recently increased its broadband speeds](#) to comply with the FCC’s new broadband definition (100/20) and is offering a lower-cost option called Internet Assist to those who income-qualify for \$25 a month. Spectrum charges \$7 to rent the modem needed to access Wi-Fi and a one-time \$65 fee for

²¹<https://mapping.massbroadband.org/map?zoom=13¢er=8138255%2C5270384&selection=2500314010&level=Towns%2FCities>

²² <https://help.bdc.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/16842264428059-About-the-Fabric-What-a-Broadband-Serviceable-Location-BSL-Is-and-Is-Not>

²³ <https://mapping.massbroadband.org/map?zoom=9¢er=-7983650%2C5171200>

²⁴ BRPC researched the plans offered to Clarksburg residents via [Spectrum’s official website](#).

professional installation or \$30 for self-installation. Customers can purchase their own modem to eliminate the \$7 monthly fee.

Using data from [BroadbandNow](#) to develop a statewide digital equity plan,²⁵ the Massachusetts Broadband Institute calculated the average lowest cost broadband prices available across the Commonwealth. The Berkshires have the third-highest average cost among all regions of the state with the average lowest broadband service costing \$68.50. Berkshire residents pay approximately 48% more than residents in the greater Boston area.

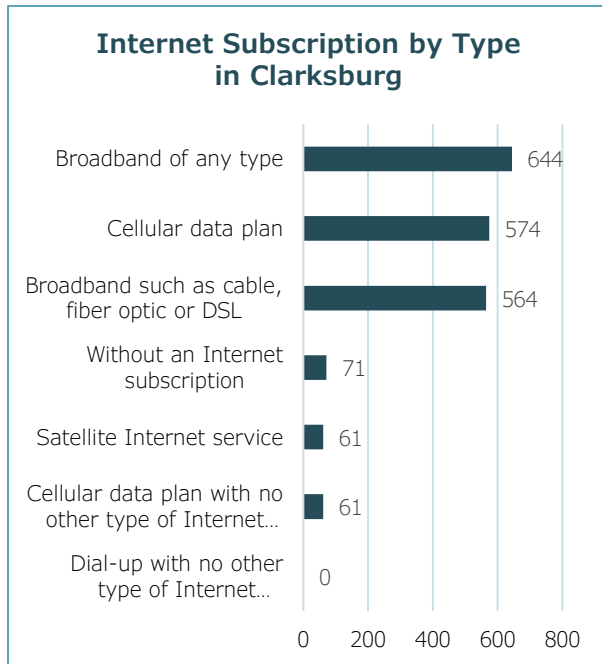


Figure 5: Census data demonstrates that most Clarksburg residents have a broadband subscription.

T-Mobile and Verizon offer fixed wireless options, but speeds are below the FCC's 100/20 Mbps minimum.

Internet Subscriptions and Device Ownership

Clarksburg mirrors the comparison towns in terms of the percentage of households that subscribe to internet (90.1% or 644 households), which is higher than Berkshire County (88%) but slightly lower than Massachusetts (90.8%).

Approximately 85.5% of Clarksburg residents own a desktop or laptop computer, a rate higher than the comparison towns.

²⁵ <https://broadband.masstech.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/MA%20SDEP%20FINAL%2011.13.pdf>

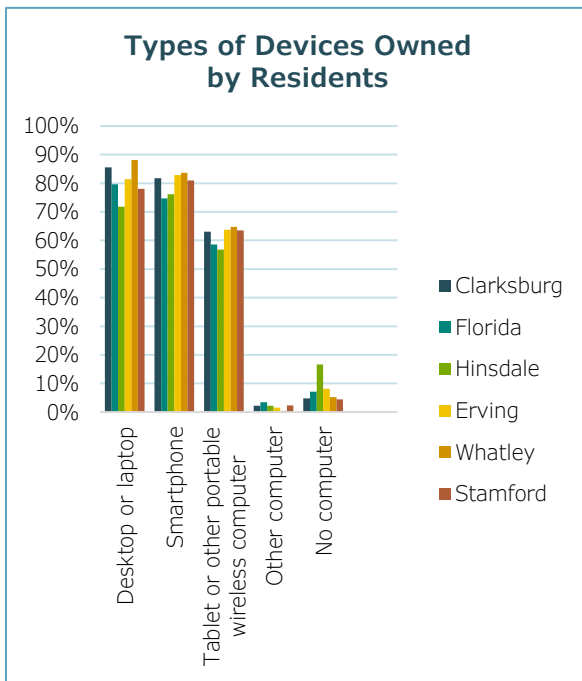


Figure 6: Census data demonstrates that Clarksburg residents predominately own computers and smartphones.

The second most-used internet-connected device in Clarksburg is a cellphone (81.7%), which aligns with the other towns. Approximately 63.1% of residents use a tablet. Only 4.8% of residents lack a device of any kind.

A [2021 study by Digitunity²⁶](#) found that cellphones' limited ability to handle complex computer tasks compared to large-screen devices can contribute to educational and health disparities, especially for BIPOC individuals, those with lower incomes, and people with disabilities. The report acknowledges that cellphones are an important stop gap to keep people engaged with online activities but concludes they are ultimately insufficient and further contribute to the digital divide.

Internet Speed

[Ookla speed test data](#) from MBI reported 354 tests conducted by Clarksburg residents between December 2021 and November 2022. Of those, 76 returned broadband-qualifying speeds of 100/20 Mbps. *Speed tests can be affected by a variety of factors including the age*

and type of device used and distance between a computing device and router, as examples.

The data suggests that, despite the presence of broadband infrastructure, few Clarksburg residents are getting speeds in their home that meet the FCC's definition of high-speed broadband.

Remote and Home-Based Work

The number of Clarksburg residents working from home increased dramatically following the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to 2020, less than 2% of Clarksburg residents worked remotely. The American Community Survey's latest estimates show a threefold increase to 5.7%. Among comparable towns, Clarksburg has the third highest percentage of remote or home-based workers. Whatley and Florida have higher percentages (14.9% and 7.1%, respectively) while Erving and Hinsdale are lower (3.7% and 2.1%).

²⁶ <https://digitalopportunity.network/resource-hub/research/the-importance-of-large-device-ownership/>

According to [a 2024 Forbes study²⁷](#), approximately 98% of workers nationwide prefer working remotely, a trend the authors predict will increase in future years, particularly for those between the ages of 25 and 34. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission notes that this cohort is in short supply in the region compared to the [state and nation.²⁸](#) High-speed internet could help Clarksburg offset population loss by attracting young professionals and families.

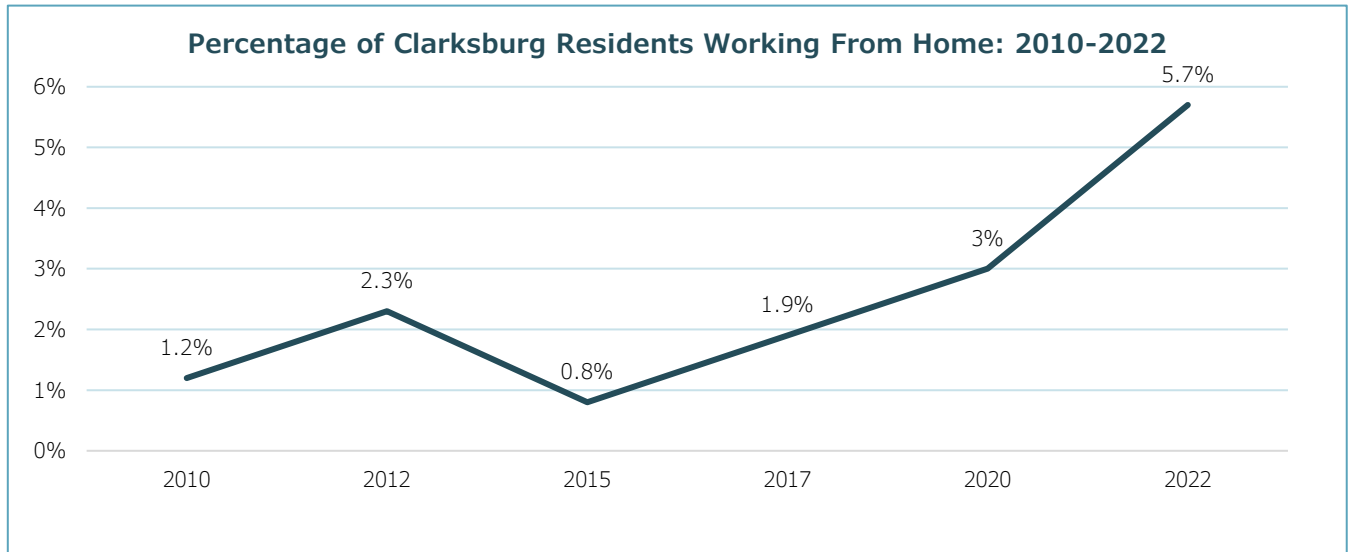


Figure 7: The % of Clarksburg's employed population working from home doubled in the last decade, according to the Census Bureau.

Employment and Income

Clarksburg's unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in more than a decade (3.5% as of 2023), a decrease from 8.6% in 2010 and 8.8% in 2020. The most common industries Clarksburg's residents work in are education, healthcare, and social assistance (31.9%) followed by construction (12.3%) and retail (11.6%). In 2023, the National Skills Coalition [released a report estimating that 92% of jobs across all industries now require digital skills](#), a statistic that should be shared with Clarksburg's parents, high school students, and young adults to convey the importance of digital competency to people's economic futures.

Environmental Justice Communities

The [Massachusetts Office of Environmental Justice and Equity](#) defines an environmental justice community as "a neighborhood that meets one or more of the following criteria: a.) the annual median household income is 65% or less of the statewide annual median; b.) minorities make up 40% or more of the population; c.) 25% or more of households identify as speaking English less than "very well"; and d.) minorities make up 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income."

²⁷ https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/remote-work-statistics/#sources_section

²⁸ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e6ca236aabc148a4818885d486b4a9c44>

Though Clarksburg has no environmental justice neighborhoods, the adjacent city of North Adams, where many Clarksburg residents turn for services, has many EJ communities.

Digital Equity Assets

Community Anchor Institutions

Government, community-based organizations, and for-profit entities all play important roles in assisting members of the covered populations access the internet, secure computer devices, and gain the confidence to take advantage of online resources. Within this broad swath of people and organizations are a group of entities called Community Anchor Institutions (CAI).

The federal government defines CAIs as “a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization (including any public housing agency, HUD-assisted housing organization, or Tribal housing organization), or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including low-income individuals, unemployed individuals, children, the incarcerated, and aged individuals.”

Clarksburg has six CAIs. Two of these — the Police Station and Town Hall — are in the same building while two others — Clarksburg Elementary School and the Clarksburg Public Library — are on the same campus/property. The last two are the Council on Aging, located in the Community Center, and the Fire Department.

MBI has and continues to prioritize CAIs as critical locations where the community should be able to access high-speed broadband. The federal government similarly requires CAIs to make available to its users reciprocal 1 Gbps download and upload speeds.

MBI previously installed fiber broadband lines throughout the Commonwealth to connect CAIs to 1 Gbps service via LocalLinx. Clarksburg, however, still uses Spectrum for its CAIs because the monthly fee for LocalLinx is too expensive.

Community Center / Senior Center

The town operates a Community Center that is home to the Council on Aging (CoA) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). The building also serves as the town’s emergency shelter. The center provides services on Mondays and Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Clarksburg Community Anchor Institutions

Community Anchor Institution	Address
Police Department	111 River Road
Fire Department	181 Cross Road
Town Hall	111 River Road.
Clarksburg Elementary School	777 Cross Road
Senior/Community Center	712 W. Cross Road
Clarksburg Public Library	711 W. Cross Road

Table 3: The Massachusetts Broadband Institution identifies six locations in Clarksburg as community anchor institutions.

The CoA's footprint reaches beyond Clarksburg to neighboring towns. Approximately 400 individuals attended programs at the CoA in fiscal year 2022, which translated into approximately 3,000 total visits. That same year, the agency benefited from 2,176 hours of volunteer assistance. Among the services offered to clients at the CoA are health benefits counseling, a food pantry, supportive day care, wellness checks, medical equipment loans, transportation, fitness and exercise classes, congregate meals, recreation, and more.

The CoA director reports that patrons often ask for help setting up and maintaining their home computers and homebound older adults, in particular, benefit from tech support that addresses feelings of isolation. Within the facility, patrons can access one computer with an internet connection and free password-protected Wi-Fi. Users, however, report poor quality service and slow speeds. The town negotiated service in its cable contract with Spectrum and the service is free.

Recently, a representative from Greylock Federal Credit Union presented a workshop about cybersecurity and banking at the CoA that drew a large crowd and received positive feedback. The workshop's popularity reinforces the concern older adults shared on MBI's *Internet for All* survey about banking fraud and online security. Such presentations happen infrequently and depend on volunteer availability.

Clarksburg Town Library

Clarksburg's public library is located next to the elementary school and doubles as the school library.

It is open to residents Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Wednesday from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. Students do not use the public library during school hours to conduct online activities. Among its technology resources are free, open Wi-Fi, two desktop computers, and a color printer. Approximately 24 patrons visit weekly. The library does not offer assistive technologies or device-



The Senior Center/Community Center is located on West Cross Road.



The Community Center currently has one computer available for the public. Free Wi-Fi is available.



Clarksburg Library has limited operating hours.

lending programs. The space is small with limited seating. The director hopes to apply for funds to establish workstations for students and adults to expand functional options.

Veterans Services Officer

The town has a veterans' services officer who assists veterans not only in Clarksburg but also Adams, Cheshire, Dalton, Florida, Lanesborough, North Adams, Savoy, and Williamstown. The veteran agent's office, located in North Adams' City Hall, intends to replace the computer station veterans use there to access services. The added computer station will help clients navigate veteran-specific systems (primarily the Veterans Affairs website) for confirmation letters, appointment scheduling, and prescription refills.

Public Schools

According to the [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(DESE\)](#),²⁹ Clarksburg Elementary School served 208 students between pre-Kindergarten and eighth grade during the 2023-2024 school year, making it the largest of five schools in the Northern Berkshire School Union. In 2024, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission [conducted a countywide school enrollment projection](#) study,³⁰ which concluded that, if current population trends continue, Clarksburg Elementary will maintain or slightly increase its school enrollment into the next decade.

[DESE](#) reports that no Clarksburg Elementary students took digital literacy and computer science courses during the most recently reported school year. School leaders, however, state that while they do not provide classes specifically focused on digital literacy, they instead incorporate digital literacy into their overall curricula. The school also uses iReady, a program that benchmarks students' digital skills, starting in kindergarten to prepare students for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test in third grade. Other applications the school uses include [Lexia](#), [Prodigy](#), [Go Guardian](#), [Google Classroom](#), [Code.org](#), and [ST math](#), a game-based program that helps pupils develop a conceptual understanding of math using visual puzzles. Two faculty members received extra training on ST math so they could answer questions raised by fellow teachers. The school's principal said she would be open to using other web-based programs if the school had funding to support subscriptions.



Clarksburg Elementary School is located on the same property as the town library.

The school assigns each student a Google Chromebook at the start of the school year. Students can use the device in school but not take it home except for special take-home projects. The school annually replaces Chromebooks by upgrading those of first and fifth graders, giving students four years to use a

²⁹ <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00630010&orgtypecode=6&>

³⁰ <https://berkshirebenchmarks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/School-Enrollment-Projections-2024.pdf>

device before replacing it. The school fixes Chromebooks internally when possible; purchases Chromebooks with warranties; and uses UpCycle to avoid landfilling technology that cannot be repaired.

Teachers use some educational technology such as smartboards, and the school recently applied for a grant to purchase more to ensure every classroom has a device. The district provides teachers with professional development opportunities to learn new technology and software. The school union identified among its key digital challenges: cybersecurity, outdated Chromebooks, and educational technology. The union is always looking for opportunities to support cybersecurity, including purchasing endpoint protection and vulnerability mitigation software.

There is no regularly scheduled internet safety program offered to students or parents. In the past, the school has partnered with the Berkshire District Attorney's Office to provide one-off internet safety and anti-cyberbullying workshops upon request.

Secondary Education

[DESE](#) reports that Drury High School currently serves 465 students in grades seven through 12, with 149 participating in digital literacy and computer science courses, including:

- [Computer Science Essentials³¹](#), designed to introduce students to computer science fundamentals and prepare them for further study in the field, and [Project Lead the Way³²](#), in which students learn about app creation, VEX robotics, and Python (text-based) programming.
- [Computer Science Principles³³](#) a Microsoft MakeCode curriculum that teaches students about computer programming, problem-solving, and creativity.

Drury serves not only Clarksburg students but also students from North Adams, Florida, and Monroe.

Every Drury High School student is assigned a Google Chromebook they can take home for notetaking, research, homework, and testing. The high school also offers students online tech support and tutoring.

In the 2021-2022 school year, North Adams Public Schools and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts announced the inception of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's [Early College Program](#) at Drury. Early College Programs blend elements of high school and college to let students experience college-level academic coursework on an articulated pathway while gaining exposure to varied career opportunities. Early college programs reduce the time and expense of earning college credits while increasing the likelihood of student completion.

During the program's first year, more than [120 students participated, earning a combined 700 college credits](#) with a savings of approximately \$317,000 in tuition costs. The Early College Program is rooted in major sectors where employees are needed in northern Berkshire County such as education, health science, liberal arts, and computer science. The [school's 2021-2022 DESE](#) report card states that 32 out of 74 (43.5%) program graduates attended a public four-year college.

³¹ <https://dhs.napsk12.org/o/dhs/page/program-of-studies>

³² <https://www.pltw.org/curriculum>

³³ <https://dhs.napsk12.org/o/dhs/page/program-of-studies>

Drury now has a [College and Career Readiness Program](#) in partnership with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and Berkshire Community College. According to DESE's [Pathways Enrollment data](#),³⁴ 75 Drury High School students in grades nine through 12 participated in the program in the 2023-2024 school year.

Vocational Education

Charles H. McCann Vocational Technical School serves 537 students in grades nine through 12.. McCann is managed by the Northern Berkshire Vocational Regional School District serving students from Adams, Williamstown, Cheshire, Lanesborough, Clarksburg, Florida, Savoy and Monroe. Based in North Adams, the district also accepts students from other district by choice.

All students take [digital literacy and computer science courses](#). According to the [student handbook](#), McCann is committed to providing high-quality educational technology to students using Google Chromebooks, which students can use at school and at home.

McCann offers a [Career Technical Education \(CTE\) Chapter 74 Program](#). CTE Programs prepare students to graduate with skills and credentials that provide them with advanced employment opportunities if they enter the workforce immediately after graduation. The programs provide students with high-quality learning experiences that enable them to see and understand their future career paths, including continued education. In the [2023-2024 school year](#), 520 students participated in the program, which includes the following technology-related courses:

- Advanced Manufacturing Technology
- Automotive Technology
- Business Technology
- Carpentry
- Drafting
- Electricity
- Metal Fabrication & Joining Technologies

Continuing and Adult Education

Clarksburg and the surrounding communities are served by a variety of continuing and adult education programs.

McCann, in addition to being a high school, also offers postsecondary and adult evening programs, including:

- Cosmetology
- Dental Assisting
- Medial Assisting
- Surgical Technology
- Practical Nursing
- Plumbing Courses
- Electrician Courses

³⁴ <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=02090505&orgtypecode=6&leftNavId=16969&>

In North Adams, residents seeking a four-year degree can apply to [Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts](#), a public college offering more than 80 academic programs, including:

- 25 undergraduate majors including two tech-related ones (computer & information science and radiologic technology)
- Undergraduate minors and concentrations, including two tech-related ones (information & technology and software development)
- Six accelerated joint degree programs
- Five distinct teacher licensure programs
- Two graduate majors
- Leadership/Certificate of Advance Graduate Study

In the [Northern Berkshire County's Municipal Digital Equity Plan](#) by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), the authors also note that MCLA partners with the Northern Berkshire Adult Basic Education (NBABE) Program to provide a digital literacy class for non-matriculating adults using the Northstar Digital Literacy Program. Computer literacy classes cover computers, smartphones, the internet, email, Google Suite, Microsoft, Excel, and more. Students in the program can take a certification exam upon completion to demonstrate competency in digital literacy topics.

North Adams Public Schools and NBABE similarly offer free adult classes and tutoring, including:

- Basic and advanced literacy and math classes
- Science/social studies
- Financial literacy
- Beginner, intermediate, and advanced English for Speakers of Other Languages classes

Farther away in Pittsfield, residents can enroll in classes at [Berkshire Community College](#), a public college whose increased enrollment since 2020 (+200) illustrates the school's critical role in serving countywide residents' needs for transitional education. According to [Drury High Schools' 2021-2022 DESE report card](#), nine out of 74 (13.1%) of its graduates attended a Massachusetts community college.

Berkshire Community College offers more than 50 associate degree and certificate programs, including business and computer information systems and 21 computer-related courses. In Fall 2023, 46 students countywide enrolled in computer and information science programs. These programs include:

- Computer Science
- Networking & Cybersecurity
- Networking
- Business Systems
- Programming- Technical
- Programming- Business

Regional Assets

Clarksburg's isolated location, small population, and limited municipal administration capacity mean that residents needing digital support must typically travel outside town to get it. Below are some regional organizations and agencies providing members of the covered population with digital support and services:

United Cerebral Palsy

[United Cerebral Palsy \(UCP\) of Western Mass](#) operates a regional [assistive technology lending library](#). The organization receives referrals from the Department of Developmental Services and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. UCP offers advanced assistive devices designed so that people can stay in their homes longer. Devices can be used for 24/7 monitoring, tracking, and voice activation.

Adlib

[AdLib, Inc.](#), a countywide organization, supports people with disabilities to live independently. The nonprofit provides skills training, peer counseling, transition services, information and referrals, and advocacy. AdLib's administrator wants to train additional staff to assist clients with technological needs, including the use of adaptive technology, so they can serve more clients.

Northern Berkshire Adult Education

The [Northern Berkshire Adult Education](#) program conducts online classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and provides Chromebooks to students who need them for permanent ownership. The ESOL program is the only online one in the county. The organization estimates that half of its students last year lacked access to large-screen computer devices.

Berkshire County Jail and House of Correction

The Berkshire County Jail and House of Correction [provides 53 different programs](#) for those incarcerated in their facility. Program foci range widely and include everything from basic and secondary adult education to behavioral health and substance use to spirituality. The [Berkshire County House of Correction](#) enrolls most participants in behavioral health programs. In 2022, The House of Correction served approximately 829 people with educational and vocational or work assignment programs.

2nd Street, 2nd Chances

[2nd Street, 2nd Chances](#) is a nonprofit that provides wraparound services to formerly incarcerated individuals. The organization has a computer lab with three computer stations for participants completing job searches and applications. Participants use the lab to take classes, find housing, and secure stabilization services. The organization recently began partnering with the Western Massachusetts Alliance for Digital Equity to increase access to devices and training.

Public Libraries

The [North Adams Public Library](#) has 20 T-Mobile hotspots it lends to patrons. The [Adams Free Library](#) has seven. They do not offer any other device lending programs or digital literacy courses at this time.

Massachusetts Attorney General's Office

The [MA Attorney General's Office](#) offers free training on cybersecurity, identity fraud, and online privacy. Its program *Internet Safety for Parents* educates adults about scams targeting children, cyber-bullying, online privacy, and prevention. *Internet Safety for Students* covers the same content but is targeted at youth. The workshop *Scams and ID Theft* helps people of all ages, including older adults, recognize online, mail, and in-person threats and explains the procedures to take if one's identity is stolen.

Project Safe Childhood

[The U.S. Department of Justice](#) operates a national effort to prevent child exploitation, which includes building coalitions and sharing tips to keep children safe online. The department hosts collaborative law enforcement presentations throughout the Commonwealth for parents, educators, and caregivers on topics

such as Being Safe and Secure Online, Social Media 101, Digital Footprint, Gaming, Cyberbullying, Sexting, Sextortion, and Protecting Against Online Predation. The U.S. Attorney's Office hosted multiple presentations in the Berkshires. The [Northern Berkshire Community Coalition \(NBCC\)](#) hosted the presentation in 2022 in North Adams.

Community Television

The [Northern Berkshire Community Television Corporation](#) (NBCTV) is a nonprofit providing public access television production facilities for residents of Adams, Cheshire, Clarksburg, and North Adams. Residents, as well as groups located in those communities (or serving their residents), can use NBTV's equipment as well as editing and production facilities. Equipment and training are both available free of charge.

NBCTV has a dedicated education coordinator who works with local schools to engage kids in the studio and on location to produce programs for the educational channel. Programming ranges from school plays and sporting events to developing class projects into television shows. Other popular shows include home-based exercise for seniors. Shows can be accessed on cable television or online at <https://www.webcast.nbctc.org/>. Clarksburg relies on NBCTV to record and air its town meetings and the Clarksburg Elementary School holiday concert.

Survey Results

Sixty-six Clarksburg residents took MBI's *Internet for All* survey between September 9, 2023, and October 8, 2024, or approximately 4.7% of the town's adult population. The breakdown of participants largely mirrors the U.S. Census Bureau's estimate of Covered Populations, the exceptions being veterans and people of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, who were underrepresented in the survey results. Survey respondents included residents over 60 (57%); people who live with children under 18 (49%); individuals with a disability (11%); people earning less than \$37,000 a year (11%); those living in affordable housing (6.4%); and Black or African-American residents (3.2%).

Internet Service

Access

Most people with internet are customers of Charter Communications/Spectrum's cable service (82.2%); a smaller percentage subscribe to Verizon fixed wireless (11.2%). Three respondents reported lacking internet at home while six reported having only a data plan through their cellphone.

Approximately 26.9% of respondents reported their internet as not good enough to meet their household's needs. Those with children and people with disabilities agreed with that statement at a higher rate than other respondents (40.9% of people with children and 42.9% of people with a disability).

Among those earning less than \$37,000 a year, half reported their internet service as not good enough to meet their needs. However, they represent a small sample size (6 total) and thus results should be viewed with caution.

Affordability

The median price paid for internet among respondents was \$89.99, commensurate with Spectrum's 300 Mbps download/10 Mbps upload package.

Nearly half of all respondents (44.2%) found the cost of internet "somewhat" or "very hard" to afford. Rates were even higher for:

- People with disabilities (71.4%)
- People who earn less than \$37,000 a year (66.6%)
- People over 60 (53.13%)

Two of the three respondents without internet cited the high cost as the reason.

How hard is it for you to pay your internet bill?

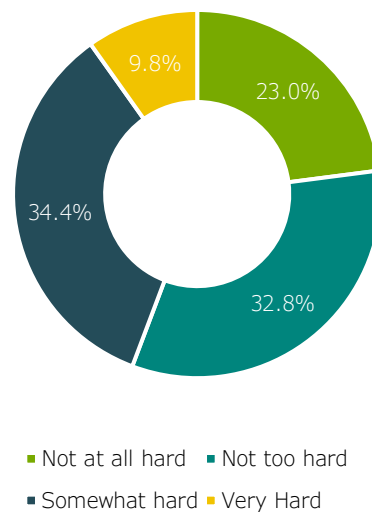


Figure 8: The results of overall respondents to the Internet for All Survey in response to a question about challenging paying the internet bill.

Despite concerns about cost, 65.5% of respondents were unaware of the Affordable Connectivity Program, which provided lower income earners with a \$30 subsidy on their monthly bill or a \$100 for a new device. Those earning less than \$37,000 a year were more aware of it, with half responding in the affirmative.

Computer Devices

Respondents largely reported having the computer devices they need (87.3%). Percentages decreased among sub-populations, including:

- People with children (81.9%)
- People with disabilities (57.2%)

Among the 60 respondents who reported on the computer devices they own, 71.6% have a cellphone and/or laptop (70%) while few own tablets (36.6%) or desktop computers (25%).

The survey also asked respondents how much they could pay for a new computer device if they needed one. Forty-five percent said they could only afford between \$0 to \$250 while 40% could pay \$250 to \$500. [A basic Google Chromebook costs about \\$200 to \\$300 while a high-end one can run as much as \\$700 or more.](#)³⁵

How much would you be able to pay for a laptop or desktop?

Amount	Number of Respondents
\$0-\$50	9
\$50-\$100	1
\$100-\$150	12
\$150-\$250	6
\$250-\$500	25
\$500-\$1,000	7
More than \$1,000	2
Total Responses	62

Table 4: Most residents responding to the *Internet for All* survey capped the amount they would pay for a computer at \$500.

Digital Skills

The survey asked respondents to rank their comfort level by completing the online tasks below:

- General internet searching
- Searching for a job
- Accessing health care
- Participating in the local community
- Accessing transportation information
- Applying for benefits

Respondents rated applying for benefits as most difficult with 36.9% calling it “not easy” or “hard.” Difficulty ratings for the other activities are below. **Rates represent those who answered, “not easy” or “hard.”*

- Accessing transportation information: 28.9%
- Accessing health care: 26.5%

³⁵ <https://www.theverge.com/21296102/best-chromebooks>

- Participating in the community: 23.1%
- Searching for a job: 16.3%
- General internet searching 9.3%

Respondents over 60 reported difficulties in all categories at higher rates:

- Applying for benefits: 52.2%
- Transportation: 45.5%
- Health care: 33.3%
- Searching for a job: 25%
- Participating in your local community: 25%
- General internet searching: 14.3%

Respondents with children reported far lower difficulty rates across categories:

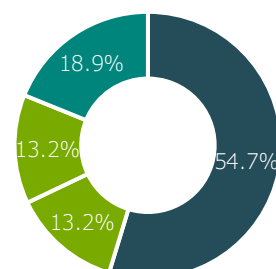
- Applying for benefits: 19%
- Participating in your local community: 18.2%
- Health care: 13.6%
- Transportation: 9.5%
- General internet searching: 9%
- Searching for a job: 4.8%

To improve their digital skills, respondents reported preferring do-it-yourself training (54.7%) followed by online classes (18.9%); in-person classes (13.2%); and in-person support from a friend or instructor (13.2%). Older adults responded favorably to do-it-yourself classes (51.7%) but expressed less support for online ones (6.9%).

Internet Safety

Respondents had serious concerns about online safety with 62.3% reporting being “very concerned” and 27.9% “somewhat concerned.” Everyone with incomes below \$37,000 reported having internet safety concerns, as did 94.1% of older adults. From a list provided to respondents, they were most fearful about data privacy (85.7%); online scams (78.6%); surveillance (53.6%); and online harassment (48.2%).

What kind of digital skills support would you be most interested in?



- A do-it-yourself training module
- In person classes
- In person support from a friend or instructor
- Online classes

Figure 9: Clarksburg residents in all demographics responding to the Internet for All survey identified the most interest in do-it-yourself training modules to improve their skills.

What are you concerned about? (Select all that apply)

Safety Concern	Number of Respondents
That my data could get stolen or used without my consent	48
That I or a loved one could be harassed or abused online	27
That I or a loved one could get scammed or tricked	44
That I could be tracked or surveilled	30

Table 5: Respondents to the *Internet for All* survey showed the greatest concern about privacy of their personal data.

Focus Groups

BRPC conducted two focus groups with Clarksburg residents, the first organized by the Council on Aging and facilitated by BRPC (six participants). The second was an open community meeting organized and led by BRPC (eight participants). The goals of the meeting were for town officials and BRPC to hear directly from the people most impacted by the digital divide to understand their unique strengths, challenges, and how they use the internet in their daily lives.

Universal Themes

Participants in both groups raised concerns about their limited choice of internet service providers and the high cost of service.

Participants in both groups expressed alarm about cybersecurity and noted their lack of confidence using the internet for online banking and bill paying. Both groups overwhelmingly supported educational programs to raise awareness about online scams and privacy protection.

Specific Challenges

- **Older adults** noted that many of their peers avoid the internet because they lack the desire and/or resources to learn how to use confidently.
- **Rural residents** expressed a desire to improve the town's infrastructure, including upgrading service at the Community Center and creating free public Wi-Fi in the park.

Focus Groups Summary

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging held a focus group with six older adults (four women and two men), one of whom was a veteran. All participants had internet service and computer devices, including iPads (3), laptops (3), and desktops (4). About half also had an iPhone or other type of smartphone. One member had an e-reader and wireless printer. Others had smart home devices and smart televisions. Five of the six subscribed to Spectrum. One had Verizon Gateway. Participants said their internet speeds generally meet their needs, but they have lost service or experienced slower speeds during inclement weather.



BRPC held the community meeting on September 14.

“I just don’t know what I’m doing, and I don’t have the patience any longer to care.” – Focus group participant.

Participants reported using the internet for entertainment, email, general research, and local news. Some expressed a lack of familiarity using telehealth services and the Berkshire Health Systems patient portal or similar online healthcare apps.

One group member reported using the internet to renew his driver’s license, acquire hunting and fishing licenses, and obtain park passes. Another used it to check Social Security benefits. Participants noted that if they felt more confident using the internet, they would use more online government services. Online banking and bill paying were two areas of discomfort. About half paid bills and banked online while the other half were hesitant. Participants shared fears about cybersecurity and internet safety related to scams, personal data security, banking fraud, and being tracked and surveilled.

Focus group members hoped that the Commonwealth could address the lack of affordable internet options in town and lack of ISP competition in Berkshire County. The group supported an internet subsidy program for older adults, especially those on fixed incomes, and felt a digital navigator would help close the digital divide for their age cohort.

Community Meeting

The town and BRPC hosted a daytime community meeting to discuss digital equity on September 14th, 2024. The town promoted the event on its own website and that of the Community Center. BRPC also mailed invitation postcards to every home. BRPC staff presented an overview of the municipal digital equity project and solicited participants’ input on activities they felt could help close the digital divide.

One member supported investing in the Community Center and installing a free public Wi-Fi network at the town park. The participant said the town is already working toward connecting the Community Center, school, library, and park through the Municipal Vulnerability Program. He added that the Community Center serves as an emergency backup location.

Another resident wanted to expand internet capabilities at the Community Center. The town’s IT director added that creating a point-to-point wireless connection between the Department of Public Works and Community Center provides the town with additional data security.

In October 2018, the town settled a court case with Verizon over the installation of a cell tower at the former North Adams Country Club. The settlement provides the town with a location to put wireless technology at no cost.

Clarksburg Community Meeting



A graphic designed to look like a postcard for a community meeting. At the top is the 'Internet for All' logo, which consists of the words 'INTERNET FOR ALL' in white capital letters inside a red rounded rectangle with a red Wi-Fi symbol to the right. Below this is a dark blue rectangular box with white text that reads 'Help Close the Digital Divide'. The next box is also dark blue with white text: 'Saturday, September 14th' and '11 a.m. - 1 p.m.'. The final box is dark blue with white text: 'Community Center' and '712 West Cross Road'. At the bottom of the postcard are four logos: the Town of Clarksburg logo, the BRPC logo, the MBI logo, and the Berkshire Broadband Institute logo.

Every household received a mailer inviting them to the meeting.

“There are families that would love to come here. It is a beautiful area. A lot of people [would] work from home, work remotely, if you gave them the option.” – Focus group participant.

maintenance. Some worried, since the community is served by Spectrum, that the company could undercut the town on pricing, making it more difficult to attract and retain new municipal subscribers. Residents unanimously supported state regulations to treat internet as a utility. Residents also spoke in favor of having digital literacy opportunities available in town, including cybersecurity training, BMC’s patient portal training, and online bill paying. BRPC asked residents to write down ideas and place stickers next to those they liked best in the categories of access, devices, and digital skills.

Residents added the following items to the list:

**Note: recommendations are listed from highest to lowest priority*

Access

- Community Center upgrades – including internet speeds and upgraded large-screen devices
- Regulating internet as a utility
- Wi-Fi in the park
- Municipal broadband

Devices

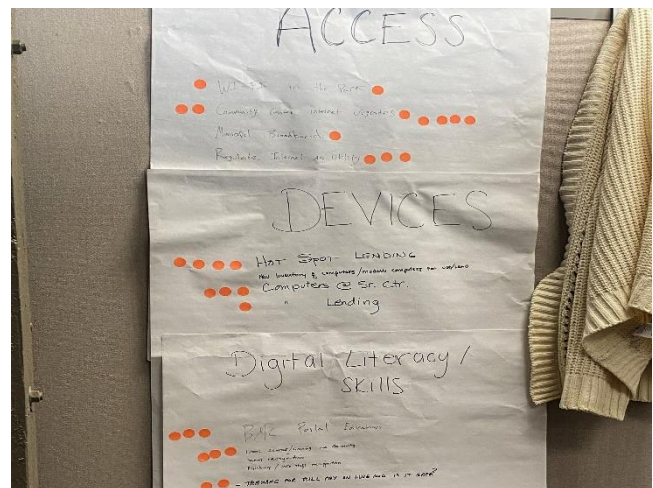
- Hotspot lending
- New computers at senior center
- Computers at senior center for lending

Digital Literacy/Skill

- Berkshire Health System (BHS) patient portal education
- Local classes on scam recognition, phishing, and information theft
- Training for online bill pay

The attendees discussed the pros and cons of municipal broadband and/or a wireless network using the cell tower. The group recognized that a wireless or municipal network would be a multi-million-dollar venture but, if successful, would give them improved internet at a more affordable rate and potentially generate revenue for the town.

While one participant was a strong advocate for municipal broadband, others acknowledged the risks if the town becomes responsible for infrastructure



Attendees wrote their ideas down and used stickers to indicate concepts they are in favor of to close the digital divide in Clarksburg.

Conclusion

Clarksburg is a small, rural, bedroom community to North Adams covering 12.8 square miles (8,187 acres). The town is nestled on the Northern border of Berkshire County adjacent to Vermont and between the Massachusetts towns of Williamstown to the west, Florida to the east, North Adams to the south, and Pownal and Stamford, Vermont to the north. Community assets include the Clarksburg elementary / junior high school, Clarksburg public library, the town field, state park, and Community Center, which is used by the Council on Aging and VFW. While under-resourced in terms of many typical services and amenities (e.g., police department, gas station, general store, town newspaper), Clarksburg's town manager is dedicated to closing the digital divide and helping residents stay connected to resources within and outside the community.

Based on extensive conversations with town administration and input from the community, BRPC identified five key next steps for digital equity implementation:

- Upgrade internet speeds at the Community Center
- Upgrade workstations at the Community Center/Council on Aging and Library
- Upgrade educational technology devices at elementary school
- Create a free, open Wi-Fi network at the Peter A Cook Memorial Field to expand outdoor learning opportunities through the local school.
- Create a device lending program (hotspots and laptops).

Clarksburg has demonstrated its commitment to realizing many of these collaborations, and with the generous support of MBI's Digital Equity Implementation funding, the year ahead looks promising.

Recommendations

Goal 1: Ensure all Clarksburg residents have access to the internet					
Index	Action	Champion	Cost	Potential Funder	Timeframe
1.1	Create hotspot lending program	Library	\$\$	Alliance for Digital Equity, MBI	6 months –1 year
1.2	Conduct feasibility study for municipal broadband or WISP network	Town Administration	\$\$\$	State Government, Philanthropic donors	1-2 years
1.3	Install public Wi-Fi at Peter A. Cook Veterans Memorial Field	Town Administration	\$\$\$	Alliance for Digital Equity	1-2 years
1.4	Form a town broadband committee	Town Administration	\$	Municipal	1-2 years
1.5	Install a computer station at the Community Center	Council on Aging, IT, Town Administration	\$\$	MBI	6 months –1 year
1.6	Support regional efforts to increase ISP competition	Town Administration	\$	MBI Gaps Network	Immediately
1.7	Install computer workstations at the library	Library, Town Administration	\$\$	MBI	6 months –1 year
1.8	Encourage fiber service providers to expand to residents' homes	Town Administration	\$	Private	Immediately
Goal 2: Raise Resident's Confidence Level in Using the Internet					
Index	Action	Champion	Cost	Potential Funder	Timeframe
2.1	Add a digital equity page to the town's website to share resources	Town Administration, IT	\$	MBI	Immediately
2.2	Host cybersecurity training courses at the Community Center	Council on Aging, Community Partners	\$\$	MBI, Private Donors	6 months–1 year

Recommendations					
2.3	Partner with Berkshire Health Systems to assist residents use the patient portal and telehealth	Council on Aging, BMC	\$	MBI, BHS	6 months–1 year
2.4	Support educator's use of ed tech	School, School Union, Town Administration, Berk K-12	\$	School, Berk K-12, Town Administration, State	6 months–1 year
2.5	Create intergenerational learning program partnering digital-native youth with older adults	Schools, Council on Aging	\$\$	Schools, Senior Center	1–2 years
2.6	Host District Attorney, Attorney General's Office, or partner with the U.S. Attorney's Office's <i>Project Safe Childhood</i> to present cybersecurity workshops to students and parents	School, School Union	\$	School, District Attorney's Office, Attorney General's Office, U.S. Attorney's Office	1–2 years
2.7	Secure funding to sustain web-based applications used by students	School, School Union, Town Administration, Berk K-12	\$\$	State, private funders	1–2 years
2.8	Host device tutorial events at Council on Aging	COA, Administration	\$	MBI, State, Private Funders	6 months – 1 year
Goal 3: Increase Residents' Access to Affordable Devices					
Index	Action	Champion	Cost	Potential Funder	Timeframe
3.1	Start laptop-lending program at the library	Library	\$\$	MBI, Alliance for Digital Equity	6 months–1 year
3.2	Connect residents with refurbishing companies and nonprofits to access lower-cost devices	Town Administration	\$	Private, Philanthropy	6 months–1 year
3.3	Upgrade internet at the Community Center	Council on Aging, IT, Town Administration	\$\$	MBI	6 months–1 year
Goal 4: Build Internal Capacity to Address Digital Technological Changes					
Index	Action	Champion	Cost	Potential Funder	Timeframe
4.1	Join the Western Mass Alliance for Digital Equity	Town Administration	\$	Town Administration, MBI, Alliance for Digital Equity	6 months–1 year

Recommendations					
4.2	Identify a digital champion among school staff	Schools	\$	School	6 months–1 year
4.3	Seek opportunities to collaborate with neighboring towns implementing digital equity plans	Town Administration	\$	Town Administration	Ongoing
4.4	Research grants to expand financial capacity to support digital equity	Town Administration	\$	Town Administration	Ongoing
Goal 5: Ensure Online Government Communications Are Accessible					
Index	Action	Champion	Cost	Potential Funder	Timeframe
5.2	Advocate for NBCTV to add subtitles, translation services, and ALC interpretation to meeting broadcasts	Town Administration	\$	Philanthropic Sources	6 months–1 year

Computer and Internet Resource Guide

The resources below focus on the digital needs of Berkshire County residents of all ages. In addition to those specifically listed, all Berkshire County libraries offer free internet access, and some lend laptops, tablets, or Wi-Fi hotspots to card holders. Senior centers may also run occasional computer classes or offer individual tech support. Check with your local library or senior center for details. **Los recursos en otros idiomas además del inglés están en rojo.** This guide was organized by **Berkshire Regional Planning Commission** (<https://berkshireplanning.org/>). If you have questions after reviewing this guide, please reach out to BRPC at digital@berkshireplanning.org.

Assistive Technologies

Assistive technologies include computers, equipment, products, and services that help people with mental or physical challenges more easily access and use online resources.

Resource	Description
<p>Choice Magazine Listening</p> <p>www.choicemagazinelistening.org/</p>	<p>A free audio magazine for adults with impaired vision or another disability. Four times a year listeners receive 12 hours of great magazine writing. A talking book player is also provided for free. Recipients enjoy the issue for several weeks, then return it in a postage-free mailer. CML is also available as a download. For more information, call toll-free 1-888-724-6423.</p>
<p>Mass. Rehabilitation Commission, Assistive Technologies</p> <p>www.mass.gov/info- details/massability- assistive- technology-services</p>	<p>Connects people with disabilities with the technology they need to live more independently. The regional provider can be found at https://www.easterseals.com/ma/programs- and-services/assistive- technology/at-at-home/. For more information, call 617-204-3851.</p>
<p>United Cerebral Palsy of Western Mass</p> <p>https://ucpwma.org/</p>	<p>Offers free durable medical equipment, an assistive technology library, and a radio reading service through Berkshire Talking Chronicle over WRRS (104.3) to support children and adults with disabilities. They also offer Computer Fundamentals Webinars to teach beginning and advanced computer knowledge and skills. For more information, call 413-442-1562. Proporciona servicios en otros idiomas además del inglés.</p>

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity involves putting in place practices, software, and hardware to protect personal information from outside threats and attacks that could put identities, finances, and safety at risk and result in negative consequences.

Resource	Description
Berkshire District Attorney's Office https://berkshiredistrictattorney.com/technology-resources/	Provides online safety resources including a Cyber-Tip Line and general safety information aimed at everyone from kids to older adults. For more information, email contact.BerkshireDA@mass.gov or call 413-443-5951.
Go Cybersafe Course for Seniors www.gocybersafe.org/the-course	Educates older adults about cybersecurity and inspires them to pursue a healthy digital lifestyle in an increasingly technology-dependent world. Curriculum was selected as one of the 25 national winners of the 2022 Prudential Emerging Visionaries Award.
Mass Attorney General: Computer and Online Privacy www.mass.gov/info-details/computer-and-online-privacy	Provides tips and insight into viruses, spyware, malware, and threats to computer systems, as well as phishing, hacking, and spam that can threaten personal identity and information. For more information, call 617-963-2223. Seleccione el idioma en la parte superior de la página para leer en el idioma de su elección.
Mass Attorney General: Cyber Crimes www.mass.gov/info-details/cyber-crimes	Offers tips to ensure people know what to look for and how to avoid cybercrimes. Seleccione el idioma en la parte superior de la página para leer en el idioma de su elección.
Virtual Private Network (VPN)	<p>A Virtual Private Network (VPN) creates a private connection between a computer or phone and a remote server with the goal of masking a person's online activity so they cannot be monitored by others. Experts suggest using a VPN both at home and when using the internet in a public place. Below is a VPN recommended by the magazine <i>Consumer Reports</i>:</p> <p>TunnelBear has an easy-to-use free version and works on Mac, PC, and Apple and Android cellphones. The free version covers 500MB of data a month. An unlimited plan starts at \$6 a month: https://www.tunnelbear.com/</p>

Discount Internet + Cell Service

Information about how to access discounted (often slower) internet service for people enrolled in programs such as SNAP, WIC, SSI, or veteran's benefits. For questions about qualifying, email digital@berkshireplanning.org.

Resource	Description
<p>Discount Internet Service</p> <p><i>The new minimum speed for internet is 100 megabits (Mbps) upload and 20 Mbps download. The lower-cost plans to the left may offer slower service such as 50/10 or 25/3.</i></p>	<p>Find internet service providers by address: https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/home</p> <p>Spectrum Internet Assist: www.spectrum.com/internet/spectrum-internet-assist</p> <p>Verizon Forward: https://www.verizon.com/discounts/verizon-forward/</p> <p>Xfinity Essentials: www.xfinity.com/learn/internet-service/internet-essentials</p> <p>All Provider Search: www.digitalinclusion.org/low-cost-internet-plans</p>
<p>Lifeline Cellular Service</p> <p>www.lifelinesupport.org/</p>	<p>Lifeline phone service provides a small amount of data (usually 4-5 GB per month) through cellular service for free for people who are income-eligible. Cellphones can be used to connect to the internet if paired with a hotspot or if using the internet via a free, open Wi-Fi network like a café or airport. For detailed information about Lifeline, see the last pages of this guide.</p>

Digital Skills: Adults

Information about free and low-cost websites that help people build their digital skills and confidence. Some are aimed at specific audiences such as older adults.

Resource	Description
<p>Cyber-Seniors</p> <p>https://cyberseniors.org/</p>	<p>Provides free technology support and training for older adults. People can book a one-on-one tech call, watch instructional webinars, check out their cybersecurity center, visit their discovery hub, or connect with helpers in the community. For more information, call 888-217-3057.</p> <p>Seleccione el idioma en la parte superior de la página para leer en el idioma de su elección.</p>
<p>Digital Skills Library Online</p> <p>https://digitalskillslibrary.org/</p>	<p>A website of free learning resources designed to help all adult learners develop the digital skills needed to achieve their personal, civic, educational, and career goals. Available in multiple languages including Spanish, Arabic, Hungarian, and French. Desplázate hacia abajo hasta Explorar todos los recursos para encontrar las opciones de idioma.</p>
<p>Digital Learn</p> <p>https://training.digitallearn.org/</p>	<p>An online hub for digital literacy support and training from the Public Library Association using self-directed tutorials. Los módulos están basados en video con narración y escritos en un lenguaje sencillo a nivel de escuela primaria a secundaria para hablantes de inglés y español.</p>
<p>Goodwill Foundation (GCF) Global</p> <p>https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/</p>	<p>A free program where people can learn essential skills such as Microsoft Office, email, and social media. The site offers more than 300 topics, including 6,000+ lessons, 2,000+ videos, and 50+ interactive exercises and games. Seleccione el idioma en la parte superior de la página para leer el sitio web en español o</p>
<p>Google Applied Digital Skills</p> <p>https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/</p>	<p>Free online, self-paced digital skills classes focused on the Google Suite such as the Google workspace, gaining job-ready skills, and 100+ free digital skills classes, including computer science and coding.</p>
<p>MA Adult Literacy Hotline</p> <p>1-800-447-8844</p>	<p>Provides referrals to over 300 adult education programs including one-on-one tutoring, small-group, and classroom instruction for adult learners.</p>
<p>Mass Vets Advisor</p> <p>www.mass.gov/collections/vets-advisor</p>	<p>A website where veterans and their families can easily search for the benefits to which they are entitled. Seleccione el idioma en la parte superior de la página para leer en el idioma de su elección.</p>

Resource	Description
<p>Northstar via BRPC</p> <p>https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/</p>	<p>A website offering free digital skills assessments and certifications. To get started, click on TRY AN ASSESSMENT. On the next screen, enter BRPC's 4-digit PIN: Z3E9. After completing your chosen assessments, email digital@berkshireplanning.org to let us know if you would like to take a proctored test to earn a certificate. Selecione el idioma en la parte inferior de la página para leer en el idioma de su elección. Northstar también está disponible en MCLA, William Stickney Adult Learning Center, 2nd Street Second Chances y Roots, Dreams y Mustard Seeds.</p>
<p>Open Office: A Free Version of Microsoft Office</p> <p>www.openoffice.org/download/</p>	<p>A free, open-source version of Microsoft Office that can be installed on computers, so people do not need to pay for a Microsoft license. Las descargas están disponibles en varios idiomas.</p>
<p>Senior Planet: AARP</p> <p>https://seniorplanet.org/</p>	<p>Free online classes for older adults through the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Older adults can also speak for free to a technology helper from 9:00 am – 8:00 pm EDT Monday to Friday by calling 888-713-3495. Haga clic en el menú principal para encontrar clases en español. 点击主菜单查找普通话课程。</p>
<p>Tech Boomers/ Tech Life Unity</p> <p>www.techlifeunity.com/</p>	<p>Free tutorials about how to use popular and trusted websites and internet apps. The site has over 60 courses that include videos for those with little to no prior computer skills.</p>
<p>Tech Foundry/Tech Hub</p> <p>https://techhubmass.net/</p> <p>https://techhubmass.ticketleap.com/</p>	<p>Free virtual and in-person (in Springfield, Mass.) tech classes covering a range of skills and subjects from beginning computer education to mastering advanced software. Students who complete six online or in-person classes are eligible to receive a free computer device. To learn more, call 413-340-1105 or email info@techhubmass.net. Selecione el idioma en la parte superior de la página para leer en inglés o español. Algunos materiales de capacitación han sido traducidos al español. Si al menos 5 personas están interesadas en una clase de español, es posible que puedan organizar una.</p>

Digital Skills: Youth

Information about resources teachers, parents, and youth advocates can use to help young people become safe and skilled digital citizens.

Resource	Description
aiEDU www.aiedu.org/	A nonprofit that believes everyone—especially students likely to be disproportionately impacted by artificial intelligence (AI)—have access to knowledge and skills to thrive as workers, creators, consumers, and citizens. They offer online classes that are both self-guided and teacher-led for teachers and advocates.
Code.org https://code.org/	Expands computer science access and participation in schools focused on young women and students from underrepresented groups. <i>Seleccione el idioma en la parte inferior de la página para leer en el idioma de su elección.</i>
DLCS Parent and Guardian Resources www.doe.mass.edu/stem/dlcs/pg-resources.html	Supports parents with digital literacy and computer science with access to MassCORE and school report cards. <i>Seleccione el menú desplegable en la parte superior de la página para leer en español. 也提供普通话。Anplis de sa, nan kreyòl ayisyen. Também em português. Cũng bằng tiếng Việt.</i>
Girls Who Code https://girlswhocode.com/locations	Works to close the gender gap in technology and change the image of what a programmer looks like and does with a focus on programs for girls. Search for a location or start a club if none exists in your community.
Teens Teach Tech https://connectednation.org/programs/teens-teach-tech	Invites teachers, youth-focused organizations, and community nonprofits to offer workshops, mentorship, virtual sessions, and community events that cover skills from computer literacy to mobile devices and staying safe online. Part of AT&T Connected Learning.

Hotspots + Large-Screen Devices

Nonprofit and for-profit companies that individuals and the organizations that serve them can use to apply for free or low-cost computers and devices.

Resource	Description
<p>Computers 4 People</p> <p>www.computers4people.org/</p>	<p>Provides free computers to income-qualifying adults; free refurbished laptops to college-bound students in financial need; and PC teen-building and digital skills classes for all ages. Computers come with the Google Chrome Suite. People can also download and install Apache Open Office for free at https://www.openoffice.org/download/. To request a device, email digital@berkshireplanning.org or call 413-442-1521 ext. 16. for more information. Computers4People currently has limited reach in Berkshire County.</p>
<p>PCs 4 People</p> <p>www.pcsforpeople.org/</p>	<p>Connects people with low-cost computers and internet services and recycles and refurbishes computers. <i>Seleccione el idioma en la parte superior de la página para leer en el idioma de su elección.</i></p>
<p>Total Access</p> <p>www.totalaccesscomputers.com/</p>	<p>Located in Adams, this for-profit business offers discounts on computer trade-ins and remote support for computer viruses and other software issues.</p>

Healthcare + Social Services

Websites where people can find health, mental health, housing, and-related resources that improve the quality of their lives.

Resource	Description
413 Cares www.413cares.org/	A searchable database of free and lower-cost services, including digital support, re-entry resources, mentoring, mental health, substance abuse treatment, housing, and food assistance.
DTA Connect https://dtaconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/	A website where people who need transitional services such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC), and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) can log in or set-up an online account to access their benefits.
Mass 211 https://mass211.org/	A program of local United Way offices that offers links to resources such as food pantries, utility assistance, domestic survivor support, mental health treatment, runaway assistance, transportation, and youth homelessness.
VA Telehealth: Bridging the Digital Divide https://telehealth.va.gov/digital-divide	A free service of the Veteran's Administration that helps veterans who don't have internet service, or an internet-connected device, get the access they need for telehealth by connecting them with a social worker and lending them a tablet if they qualify.

Municipal Broadband

Information for town leaders interested in learning about moving their towns toward municipal broadband.

Resource	Description
<p>Connect Humanity</p> <p>https://connecthumanityfund/</p>	<p>Provides tailored investments, strategic advice, and technical guidance to help under-served communities build the internet infrastructure needed to thrive.</p>
<p>Internet Society</p> <p>https://www.internetsociety.org/</p>	<p>Membership-based organization promoting the development of the internet as a global technical infrastructure, advancing the development of technologies, and advocating for policies that support the internet as a positive tool to benefit people.</p>
<p>Mass. Broadband Coalition</p> <p>https://www.ma-bc.org/</p>	<p>A membership based organization that includes towns and organizations working toward creating municipal broadband. Join their Google Group to be kept updated on monthly meetings and grant opportunities.</p>
<p>Mass Digital Service</p> <p>https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-digital-service</p>	<p>A statewide agency designed to help partners use the best technology, design, and data to make every interaction with the Mass. government simpler, faster, and more meaningful. Mass. Digital is part of the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security.</p>
<p>US Ignite</p> <p>https://www.us-ignite.org/</p>	<p>Creates next-generation internet applications to benefit the public using new technology. They work closely with HUD's ConnectHome's key ISP stakeholders.</p>
<p>Vernonberg Group</p> <p>https://www.vernonburggroup.com/</p>	<p>A consulting firm based in Georgia that works with businesses, organizations, and governments providing expertise on digital equity programming, large-scale broadband studies, fundraising, mapping, and policy.</p>

Resources for Organizations

Resources that can be accessed by nonprofits to help them expand the services and resources they offer clients as well as their own knowledge about digital equity activities happening in the Commonwealth.

Resource	Description
<p>Alliance for Digital Equity</p> <p>https://sites.google.com/view/alliancefordigitalequity/services</p>	<p>Offers digital equity services to nonprofit partners in Western Mass. including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital skills training workshops and train-the-trainer options • Devices - laptops, Chromebooks, tablets • Hotspots - <i>coming soon</i> • Digital Navigator – Based at PCTV • Complete an online request for services for clients at the link at left. <p>Once-monthly digital alliance Zoom calls for digital equity champions and advocates in Western Mass. Email Diane.Fisher@baystatehealth.org to be added to the list.</p> <p>There is also a Zoom for Berkshire County organizations. Email wgoodman@berkshireplanning.org to be added to the list.</p>
<p>Public Health Institute of Western MA (PHIWM): Library and CoA Zooms</p> <p>https://www.publichealthwm.org/</p>	<p>Provides free resources to libraries and Councils on Aging through a partnership with the Public Health Institute of Western MA (PHIWM). Get involved by:</p> <p>Attending PHIWM's monthly digital equity Zooms. Stay up-to-date on emerging digital equity issues and resources. Librarians and CoA directors can listen in or be added to the email list. PHIWM is also happy to meet with librarians and CoA directors via Zoom or in-person to explain their work.</p> <p>Libraries Zoom: 3rd Monday of the month from 2-3 pm. Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5234636756.</p> <p>CoA Zoom: 4th Tuesday of the month from 10-11 am. Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5234636756.</p> <p>For more info. contact Liv Anna Homestead @ lhomstead@publichealthwm.org or by phone 413-795-0594 or Beyonca Twiggs at btwiggs@publichealthwm.org.</p>

<p>The a11y Project</p> <p>https://www.a11yproject.com/</p>	<p>A community-driven effort to improve digital accessibility. Features an extensive resource library and tools to assist communities and organizations audit their own web assets and create online content that is accessible to people of all abilities and assistive technologies.</p>
<p>Tech Soup</p> <p>https://www.techsoup.org/</p>	<p>A nonprofit working to build a dynamic bridge that enables design and implementation of technology solutions for a more equitable planet. They provide nonprofit leaders with software, hardware, and technology services as well as informative resources to help leaders gain mastery with the latest technology including artificial intelligence. TechSoup Connect mobilizes community organizers to host local tech-for-good meetups all over the world. Attend one, or create your own.</p>

Workforce + Small Business

Resources that teach people advanced skills that make them more employable in a digital economy. Some resources focus on unique audiences such as women, veterans, and people of color.

Resource	Description
1Berkshire: The Jobs Thing https://berkshires.org/living-here/the-jobs-thing/	A Berkshire County website overseen by 1Berkshire, the county's economic development agency, where people can find a wide range of jobs, including ones in the engineering/technology sector as well as remote work. All positions posted pay at least \$40K a year.
BreakThrough Tech www.breakthroughtech.org/	A program that seeks to increase women and non-binary students graduating with degrees in computer science and tech. They offer a one-year virtual and in-person AI program and a shorter internship with tech companies. Students can apply to join either program. The next registration date is in December 2024.
Fiber Broadband Association OptIC Path https://fiberbroadband.org/education-and-certification/fba-optic-path/	Provides future technicians with knowledge and skills needed for careers in fiber broadband such as telecom, internet service, and installation.
Free Online College and Advanced Study Courses	Coursera: www.coursera.org/collections/popular-free-courses EdX: https://www.edx.org/ Khan Academy: www.khanacademy.org/ MIT: http://ocw.mit.edu/ Stanford: https://online.stanford.edu/free-courses
Mass CyberCenter Jobs Board https://jobs.masscybercenter.org/companies	Showcases jobs and internships in the Commonwealth and remote positions with Massachusetts companies focused on cybersecurity and technology.

MassHire www.masshireberkshirecc.com/jobseekers/ https://masshirespringfield.org/computer-skills/	<p>MassHire Berkshires serves adult and youth jobseekers. They can be reached by phone at 413-499-2220 or email info@MassHireBerkshireCC.com. They are located in Pittsfield at 160 North Street, 3rd Floor. They offer a computer lab and provide clients with help with resume writing. They can connect people with both entry-level and higher-level jobs that require digital skills. For those looking to develop digital skills first, online and on-demand classes are available at MassHire Springfield.</p>
Opportunity: LinkedIn www.opportunity.linkedin.com/	<p>Free learning paths mapped to in-demand jobs, discounted Microsoft certifications to validate skills, and best practices for job searching and interviewing so people can put their best foot forward.</p>
Tech Foundry https://thetechfoundry.org/	<p>An 18-week program to prepare people for IT careers. The program combines technical skills, professional development, and career readiness supported by experienced and committed staff through a mix of classes, projects, and labs. For more information, call 413-276- 0609 or visit https://thetechfoundry.org/contact-us/.</p>
Telecomm. Industry Apprenticeship Program www.tirap.org/	<p>Offers former military professionals a structured pathway to earn income while learning the skills to pursue a meaningful career in telecom. Contact them at https://www.tirap.org/contact_us/.</p>
Verizon Innovative Learning www.verizon.com/learning/about	<p>Expands digital access support to small businesses to protect the climate and prepare people for jobs of the future.</p>
Molari Employment www.molariinc.com/	<p>A Pittsfield-based employment agency that offers a wide range of job postings, including remote data entry positions for people with digital skills and devices.</p>

Other Resources





A range of miscellaneous resources related to phone and software how-to, tips, and more.

Resource	Links
Android	<p>Android basics from Goodwill: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/androidbasics/</p> <p>Android phones are manufactured by different companies. To identify the phone manufacturer, Google search for the name, model, and "how to" or "guide." Most phone manufacturers have device-specific guides on their websites.</p>
Google	<p>Chromebooks basics from Goodwill: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/chromebookbasics/</p> <p>Google apps from Goodwill: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/topics/googleapps/</p> <p>Google Chromebook guides: https://www.google.com/chromebook/howto/</p> <p>Google skills – multiple: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/topics/googleapps/</p> <p>Make voice calls for free with a Google phone #: https://voice.google.com/</p> <p><i>*Users may need a landline or personal mobile phone number first to use this service.</i></p>
iPhone / iPad	<p>iPhone basics from Goodwill: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/iphonebasics/</p> <p>iPhone guide: https://support.apple.com/guide/iphone/welcome/ios</p> <p>iPad basics from Goodwill: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/ipadbasics/</p> <p>iPad Guide by Apple: https://support.apple.com/guide/ipad/welcome/ipados</p> <p>Manage photo and video storage: https://support.apple.com/en-us/105061</p> <p>Optimize storage space on iPhone or iPad: https://support.apple.com/en-us/108429</p>





iPhone/iPad	<p>Reset an Apple PIN code: https://support.apple.com/en-us/119858</p> <p>YouTube guides to Apple devices and software: www.youtube.com/@applesupport</p>
Microsoft	<p>MS Office: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/training https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/subjects/office/</p> <p>MS Teams: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7</p>
Video Streaming	<p>Discount Amazon Prime (with commercials) for SNAP recipients: www.amazon.com/gp/video/splash/freevee_findus/</p> <p>www.amazon.com/58f8026f-0658-47d0-9752-f6fa2c69b2e2/qualify</p> <p>Tubi TV: https://tubitv.com/home</p> <p>Hoopla and Kanopy: Many libraries in Mass. offer free access to online video streaming with Hoopla and/or Kanopy. Check with your local library.</p> <p>Other: Many paid streaming services (e.g., Max, Netflix, Hulu) offer a free trial or have discounted sales on occasion. If users do not want to pay, they should set-up at least one cancel reminder before the first bill arrives. Some monthly or annual services let people cancel immediately while still enjoying the remainder of their subscription.</p>
Windows	<p>Windows 10 from Goodwill: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/windows10/</p> <p>Windows 11 Features & Tips: www.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/tips/</p> <p>Windows 11 Microsoft guides: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/meetwindows11</p>
Zoom	<p>Zoom Learn: https://learning.zoom.us/learn</p> <p>Zoom for Chromebook: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=us.zoom.pwa.twa&hl=en_US&gl=US&pli=1</p>

Other Resources Continued

Top 4 Password Managers Recommended by *Consumer Reports*: 2023

 <p>CR RECOMMENDED DESKTOP & MOBILE PASSWORD MANAGERS</p> <p>1Password Families from \$60.00 Shop</p>	<p>OVERALL SCORE</p> <p>69</p>	<p>USABILITY</p> <p>5 / 5</p>	<p>DATA SECURITY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>DATA PRIVACY</p> <p>3 / 5</p>	<p>MAC</p> <p>Yes</p>
 <p>CR RECOMMENDED DESKTOP & MOBILE PASSWORD MANAGERS</p> <p>Dashlane Premium from \$60.00 Shop</p>	<p>OVERALL SCORE</p> <p>69</p>	<p>USABILITY</p> <p>5 / 5</p>	<p>DATA SECURITY</p> <p>3 / 5</p>	<p>DATA PRIVACY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>MAC</p> <p>Yes</p>
 <p>CR RECOMMENDED DESKTOP & MOBILE PASSWORD MANAGERS</p> <p>Keeper Unlimited from \$17.49 Shop</p>	<p>OVERALL SCORE</p> <p>69</p>	<p>USABILITY</p> <p>5 / 5</p>	<p>DATA SECURITY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>DATA PRIVACY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>MAC</p> <p>Yes</p>
 <p>CR RECOMMENDED DESKTOP & MOBILE PASSWORD MANAGERS</p> <p>Keeper Free ---</p>	<p>OVERALL SCORE</p> <p>67</p>	<p>USABILITY</p> <p>5 / 5</p>	<p>DATA SECURITY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>DATA PRIVACY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>MAC</p> <p>Yes</p>

Top 4 Wi-Fi Routers Recommended by *Consumer Reports*: 2024

 <p>CR RECOMMENDED MESH WIFI</p> <p>Netgear Orbi 750 Series AX5200 (3-pack) from \$249.99 Shop CR Smart Buy</p>	<p>OVERALL SCORE</p> <p>90</p>	<p>DATA SECURITY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>DATA PRIVACY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>THROUGHPUT NEAR</p> <p>5 / 5</p>	<p>THROUGHPUT MIDRANGE</p> <p>5 / 5</p>
 <p>CR RECOMMENDED MESH WIFI</p> <p>Linksys Velop Pro 6E Mesh System (3-pack) from \$299.99 Shop</p>	<p>OVERALL SCORE</p> <p>90</p>	<p>DATA SECURITY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>DATA PRIVACY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>THROUGHPUT NEAR</p> <p>5 / 5</p>	<p>THROUGHPUT MIDRANGE</p> <p>5 / 5</p>
 <p>CR RECOMMENDED MESH WIFI</p> <p>Linksys Velop AXE5400 Mesh System (2-pack) from \$299.05 Shop</p>	<p>OVERALL SCORE</p> <p>89</p>	<p>DATA SECURITY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>DATA PRIVACY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>THROUGHPUT NEAR</p> <p>5 / 5</p>	<p>THROUGHPUT MIDRANGE</p> <p>5 / 5</p>
 <p>CR RECOMMENDED MESH WIFI</p> <p>Netgear Nighthawk MK93S AXE5700 (1 router & 2 satellites) from \$357.99 Shop</p>	<p>OVERALL SCORE</p> <p>88</p>	<p>DATA SECURITY</p> <p>4 / 5</p>	<p>DATA PRIVACY</p> <p>2 / 5</p>	<p>THROUGHPUT NEAR</p> <p>5 / 5</p>	<p>THROUGHPUT MIDRANGE</p> <p>5 / 5</p>

A Guide to Lifeline Cell Service

Lifeline may be able to offer a discounted landline phone for close to \$10 a month OR provide cellular internet service that includes 1000 minutes of talk time, unlimited texting, and 4.5 gigabytes (GB) of data for free if a person is income-eligible. To learn more, visit <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/>, call the Lifeline Support Center at 800-234-9473, or email LifelineSupport@usac.org.

Tips to Make the Lifeline Enrollment Process Easier:

Application: Start an application at <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/>. You may need to upload a picture of your ID card or a document showing proof that you are income eligible such as SNAP, WIC, or veteran's benefits. When completing the application, use the name on your Social Security card or state ID. If you used a different name for a qualifying benefit (e.g., SNAP), update that first or call Lifeline for guidance.

How to choose a Lifeline cellular/internet service (ISP) provider: To choose a provider, go to <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/> and enter your zip code. The site will suggest ISPs that serve your area. Two of the most common ISPs are SafeLink and Assurance Wireless. Once you choose a provider and your application is approved, you will be sent a SIM card (and possibly a free phone). They will arrive in the mail, often within a week.

If you don't have a phone: Lifeline phones are free but generally low-quality Android phones that can be frustrating. People have reported they stutter when scrolling, are slow to switch between apps, and freeze or crash sometimes.

If you have a phone: Call the Lifeline ISP directly if you want to use your own phone with a Lifeline plan. You may be able to use a Lifeline SIM card in your phone. Sometimes your card will work immediately, but it can stop working unexpectedly, even months later, requiring you to buy a 99-cent bring-your-own device SIM that Lifeline will need to activate. If you have a phone and want to keep it, have the Lifeline provider activate the SIM card. Most phones are compatible, but not all, and the phone first needs to be "unlocked," which may need to be done through the carrier from which you purchased the phone.

Transferring a phone number from an old cell plan to Lifeline: Call your original cell phone provider for guidance.

Lifeline renewal: You need to call Lifeline at least once a month to keep your service active and re-certify your eligibility at least once a year. You should read and respond to all emails and texts from Lifeline as soon as you receive them.

Alternatives to Lifeline

Internet-based cellphone service: You can use the internet to make phone calls and send text messages through mobile phone apps like TextNow (www.textnow.com/), NextPlus (<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/nextplus-private-phone-number/id920869470>) and others. Free apps, however, force people to see commercials first. They can be set up on Android or iOS (Apple) phones by downloading the apps and going through their setup instructions.

Low-cost cellphone plans: Many providers offer low-cost plans with limited minutes and a small amount of data -- or none. Some plans may not work everywhere. Phone company websites usually have a zip code

search that people can use to see if their area is served. Visit [https:// www.tomsguide.com/us/best-cheap-cell-phone-plans,review-4504.html](https://www.tomsguide.com/us/best-cheap-cell-phone-plans,review-4504.html) to see if your cellphone service provider offers a low-cost option.

Refurbished cellphone devices: Refurbished cellphones are an option for lowering cell service but can be tricky. iPhone 8 will likely stop getting crucial security updates in 2024. Windows 10 will lose support in late 2024. For older Android phones, it's harder to find out for how long they'll be supported, so some may no longer be. The links below are websites people can visit to find refurbished, low-cost devices. People may need to document their income-eligibility:

<https://www.human-i-t.org/low-cost-devices/>

<https://www.pcsforpeople.org/get-tech/>

Devices work best when logging in with an existing account. If a person does not remember their account login, they will need to reset their password. If they don't have a device, it should be easy to set up a new one if they have internet access. It is recommended to write your password down or enter it into a password manager.

Many devices (Android & Windows in particular) come with software that is not useful or is junk. People may wish to uninstall or disable these apps. To disable an app, go to settings, all apps, open an app, and choose "Disable."

Hotspots: People can ask their local library if they offer loaner hotspots. Hotspots typically offer 25 GB a month of service for regular speed internet. After that, service gets throttled and for some people is too slow. Many people experience slow hotspot speeds unless they are near a cellphone tower. Hotspots may be slower than internet plans.

If people have unlimited internet service on their phone, it is possible that for free or for a small additional monthly cost, they can use their phone as a hotspot. This is not ideal because it will use up a phone's battery more quickly but can be better than a costly additional internet service.

Future Funding Opportunities

In addition to MBI's Digital Equity Implementation funding, the chart below provides examples of additional grants the town and its partners can pursue to meet unmet challenges. The list of opportunities is not exhaustive, and some may not be available until 2025. The town and its partners should stay apprised of [BRPC's Berkshire Funding Focus](#) website for notifications of federal and state grants and learn how to use the [Candid/Foundation Database at the Berkshire Athenaeum](#) to search for federal, state, and philanthropic grants not included.

National		
Program	Description	Potential Applicant(s)
<u>Rural Healthcare Connect Program</u>	This program seeks to improve the quality of healthcare available to patients in rural communities by ensuring eligible healthcare providers have access to telecommunications and broadband.	Berkshire Medical Center
<u>AARP Community Challenge Grants</u>	<p>AARP Community Challenge grants may be used to support three project types. Project types described below will be prioritized over those that support ongoing programming or events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent physical improvements in the community • Temporary demonstrations that lead to long-term change • New, innovative programming pilots or services 	Nonprofits

State		
Program	Description	Potential Applicant(s)
<u>Mass Cyber Center Cyber Resilient Massachusetts Grant Program</u>	Municipalities in Massachusetts are eligible to receive a one-time grant of up to \$25,000 to support cybersecurity improvements based on a vulnerability assessment conducted by a qualified provider. Respondents may apply grant funding towards the cost of vendors to implement the cybersecurity improvements or IT-related staff costs of the municipality performing the services in lieu of using a vendor.	Town of Clarksburg
<u>DESE - Computer Science Engage Grant</u>	This continuation grant aims to establish and promote rigorous, engaging, and standards-aligned digital literacy and computer science (DLCS) education in public schools for kindergarten through grade 12. This grant supports the creation of new programs and/or expansion of existing programs to serve more students who are the most underserved (including but not limited to students designated as economically disadvantaged, English language learners, special education, underrepresented minorities, underrepresented females, and those living in rural areas).	Clarksburg School
<u>DESE - Middle School Career Connected Learning Partnership Grant</u>	This competitive grant aims to assist school districts in planning and developing a career-connected learning model for middle school students. activities and projects will be developed to support students as they discover their personal interests, skills, talents, and passions, explore careers that align with those attributes, and engage in meaningful experiences to deepen their learning. The model will help students see the relevance of their academic learning as they begin exploring careers and understand all the potential learning opportunities and pathway options that will be available when they transition to high school	Clarksburg School

Future Funding Opportunities

<u>MassLINKS — Adult Education Virtual School (DESE)</u>	Recruits, intakes, orients, enrolls, instructs, assesses, advises, offers supportive services to, and posts exit follow-up for adult learners not served by programs currently funded by ACLS and/or whose need for services is not met by programs currently funded by Adult and Community Learning Service. All services must be delivered virtually. This grant could be accessed to address the needs of out-of-school adult learners.	Local educational agencies; Community-based or Faith-based organizations; Volunteer literacy organizations; Institutions of higher education; Public or private nonprofits
<u>MassBoard of Library Commissioners (MBLC)</u>	The Open Program allows applicants to apply new methods to solve problems, build programs, and best conduct their library's mission and plan. It encourages creative program development and rewards those librarians willing to engage in a higher level of effort and to take those risks. The federal LSTA program encourages such innovation and risk-taking.	Town of Clarksburg
<u>Municipal Fiber Grant Program</u>	A competitive grant program that will support the closing of critical gaps that exist in municipal networks. The provision of fiber in communities allows for centralized management of IT infrastructure, including an enterprise approach to network monitoring, cybersecurity, records management, and backup and recovery. A key provision of this grant program is that the fiber must be owned by the municipality.	Town of Clarksburg
<u>Massachusetts Councils on Aging Grant & Funding Resources</u>	As the voice of older adults in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) champions policies and programs that enhance the well-being of older adults and strengthen the capacity of local Councils on Aging (COAs). Through advocacy, collaboration, and resource sharing, MCOA ensures that older adults have access to the services and support they need to thrive in their communities.	Councils on Aging
<u>Community Compact IT Grant Program</u>	A competitive grant program focused on driving innovation and transformation at the local level via investments in technology. Grants of up to \$200,000 support the implementation of innovative IT projects by funding related one-time capital needs such as technology infrastructure or software. Incidental or one-time costs related to the capital purchase such as planning, design, installation, implementation and initial training are eligible.	Town of Clarksburg

Philanthropic

Program	Description	Potential Applicant(s)
<u>Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund Trust</u>	This Mass-based foundation has made grants to 221 organizations, nearly all in the state, since 2018. Among their foci are health, human services, and public safety. They have made no grants in the Berkshires but 12 in neighboring counties totaling over \$1.7M.	Nonprofits
<u>Berkshire Bank Foundation Inc.</u>	The foundation supports organizations involved with arts and culture, environmental education, employment, housing, mentoring, human services, immigrant advocacy, military and veterans, and economically disadvantaged people. Special emphasis is directed toward programs designed to promote education and community economic development.	Nonprofits
<u>Donald C McGraw Foundation, Inc.</u> <u>*No website</u>	This funder has awarded 36 grants in Berkshire County since 2018, including to Hillcrest Educational Centers, Berkshire Education and Correction Services, and Berkshire Medical Center. They can be approached for telehealth grants.	Berkshire Education and Correction Services, Berkshire Medical Center, Hillcrest Education Centers
<u>Feigenbaum Foundation</u>	Based in Pittsfield, they have awarded 303 grants in Berkshire County since 2018, including to The Berkshire Museum, Berkshire Taconic Foundation, and Community Access to the Arts. Among their foci are education, arts, and human services. This funder could support youth digital literacy through the arts.	Nonprofits
<u>Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund</u>	A Boston-based philanthropy that has awarded 321 grants in the Berkshires since 2018, including to 18 Degrees, Berkshire United Way, and Berkshire Taconic. Among their foci are education and human services, which dovetail into digital equity.	Nonprofits
<u>Greylock Federal Charitable Giving</u>	Provides support through grants and sponsorships to 501(c)(3)s and schools in communities in which Greylock has a physical location or large concentration of members. Foci related to digital equity include education, financial literacy, health, human services, and economic development.	Nonprofits

Future Funding Opportunities

<u>Mountain One Community Dividend Grants</u>	Funding preference is given to organizations or specific not-for-profit programs that support small businesses or low- to moderate-income individuals and families. Qualified 501(c)3 organizations may apply once annually for funding from Mountain One in support of programs and projects that directly impact our local communities and customers.	Nonprofits
<u>Pittsfield Co-op Charitable Donations</u>	Since 1889, Pittsfield Cooperative Bank has been committed to enhancing the economic vitality and social welfare of the communities we serve through charitable donations. A major focus of their charitable giving is directed towards education, youth programs, and community development.	Nonprofits
<u>Vanguard Charitable Philanthropic Impact Fund</u>	The Philanthropic Impact Fund (PIF) issues grants to nonprofits through a competitive RFP process ranging from \$30,000-\$50,000. Requests can be for full or partial funding.	Nonprofits
<u>Jane and Jack Fitzpatrick Trust</u>	The Jane & Jack Fitzpatrick Trust makes capital grants and project grants that are important to the mission of the applying nonprofit. The Trust will consider matching challenge grants where appropriate. The Fitzpatrick Trust is particularly interested in offering support to projects that deliver positive economic results to the community.	Community TV, Nonprofits
<u>Corporation for Public Broadcasting</u>	CPB provides funding for the development of public media television, radio, and digital content as well as multiplatform projects that reflect public media's mission to educate, inform and inspire the American public by providing stories through diverse perspectives, genres, styles and technologies.	Community TV
<u>Spectrum Digital Education Grant</u>	Spectrum Digital Education grants support nonprofits whose work includes digital skills training, professional advancement opportunities, and technology and resources needed for education.	Nonprofits
<u>Point32Health Foundation</u>	Point32Health Foundation supports work to advance equity in aging—prioritizing efforts that address systemic inequities. We invest in nonprofit organizations centering community-led solutions that address systemic inequities. We give grants in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island.	Councils on Aging

Glossary

Bandwidth

The rate at which a network can transmit information. Higher bandwidth is typically more desirable. The amount of bandwidth available can determine whether a user can download a photo in two seconds or two minutes.

Broadband Equity

A condition in which all people and communities can access and use affordable, high-speed, reliable internet that meets their needs. Broadband can be delivered over wire (i.e., fiber or cable) or wirelessly (i.e., cellular). The FCC recently set the new speed of high-speed broadband at 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload. Some fiber providers have proposed even higher speeds of 100/100 symmetrical Mbps.

Digital Divide

The gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not. As technology evolves, the digital divide prevents equal participation and opportunity in all parts of life, disproportionately affecting people of color, Indigenous people, low-income households, people with disabilities, people in rural areas, and older adults.

Digital Equity

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, life-long learning, and access to essential services. Equity acknowledges the systemic barriers that must be dismantled before achieving equality for all.

Digital Inclusion

Refers to the activities necessary to ensure all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) including five elements: 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. Digital Inclusion must evolve as technology advances. Digital Inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional, and structural barriers to technology access and use.

Digital Inclusion Ecosystem

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 Literacy

The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information requires both cognitive and technical skills.

Digital Navigator

Trusted guides who assist community members around internet adoption and use of computing devices. Digital navigation services include ongoing assistance with affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, and application support.

Digital Redlining

Discrimination by internet service providers in the deployment, maintenance, or upgrade of infrastructure or delivery of services based on income, race, or ethnicity.

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)

The technology used to provide high-speed internet using telephone networks.

Fiber Optic

A system that uses glass or plastic to carry light that is used to transmit information. Typically, each side of a fiber strand is attached to a laser that sends light signals. When the connection reaches capacity, the lasers can be upgraded to send more information along the same strand. Fiber technology has been used for decades and will remain the dominant method of transmitting information for the near future.

Fixed Wireless

A connectivity model that uses stationary wireless technology to bridge the “last mile” between the internet backbone and subscriber.

Hotspot

A physical location that offers internet access over a wireless local area network (LAN) through use of a router connected to an internet service provider.

Gap Network

A network — usually fixed wireless or Long-Term Evolution (LTE) — deployed quickly and at comparatively low cost to address immediate connectivity in a small area. Many gap networks were launched at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Internet Service Provider (ISP)

An Internet Service Provider is a company that provides services to access and use the internet.

Last Mile

The final leg of a connection between an internet service provider and the customer. In DSL and cable systems, this is the most frequent bottleneck and most expensive to resolve. An ISP may run a faster fiber-optic network into the neighborhood but deliver the last mile (which may be far away) with a phone line that cannot sustain fast speeds.

Megabits (Mbps)

A measure of speed in which 8 Mbps means that 8 million bits of information are transferred each second. Using an 8 Mbps connection, it would take one second to transfer a 1 Mbps file such as a photo. More Mbps are faster. One Kbps (Kilobits) is less than 1 Mbps, which is less than 1 Gbps (Gigabits).

Middle Mile

The network connection between the last mile and the broader internet. For instance, in a rural area, the middle mile connects the town's network to a larger metropolitan area where it connects with major carriers.

Wi-Fi

Networking technology that allows computers and other devices to access the internet using a wireless signal.