CONNECT BEAVER COUNTY
.ıllBridging the Digital Divide

Connect Beaver County
Digital Coach

MARCH 2023

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Connect Beaver County Broadband Program

Beaver County is advancing a Broadband Program which brings high-speed Internet to the communities that need it most. Through the Connect Beaver County Broadband Program, access to broadband service will be provided in parts of 24 municipalities across the county in areas that are unserved or underserved. This initiative will utilize nearly $20 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and aims to be completed by December 2024.

The Issue

We've identified 24 municipalities with areas in Beaver County that do not have access to the internet or struggle with unreliable service. This impacts the quality of life for residents of our community struggling with online education and remote work. The Project Team is working with the providers to establish a specific timeline for expanding service into those areas that have been identified as unserved and underserved.

The Process

The Beaver County Commissioners have approved the use of nearly $20 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to bring high-speed Internet to the communities across the county that need it most. Through this program, broadband service access will be delivered to parts of 24 municipalities that are unserved or underserved. The funding must be allocated by 2024 and allows until 2026 for the work to be completed.

The Solution

The Connect Beaver County Program includes five key actions:

1. New Broadband Service Delivery
2. Digital Navigator Program
3. Connect County Towers via Fiber
4. Broadband Utility Connection Fund
5. Continued Digital Equity and Data Collection Analyses

Launching the Beaver County Digital Coach

The Beaver County Digital Coach refers to a digital navigator program tailored to the needs of Beaver County residents who lack Internet access and the skills to be able to comfortably use and benefit from Internet access when it is available. Despite the rising importance of Internet access, some residents have been left behind and have not had the opportunity to become familiar with the available technology, from operating a computer and using email services to accessing telehealth, navigating job application portals, using simple computing software and other applications. Digital navigators such as the Beaver County Digital Coach program assist users in learning how to use the Internet to access information and available opportunities.

While digital navigators have existed in some capacity pre-COVID-19, the onset of the pandemic and the requirement to transition to digital spaces for school, work, healthcare, social services, and beyond have created an imperative to expand. Many recent digital navigator programs began as mainly online and/or remote services with limited brick and mortar spaces, due to requirements of social distancing. As in-person services are once again built out, the approach to designing digital navigator programs and their associated physical spaces is of prime interest and importance.

In designing a digital navigator program within the context of the Beaver County Broadband Program, the county prioritized rebranding from "digital navigators" to "Digital Coaches" to enhance the understanding of the purpose and focus of the program. Beaver County's Digital Coach Program aims to achieve the following goals :

Beaver County is seeking to build out a network of publicly accessible spaces across the county that will host Digital Coach Programs.

Enhance digital literacy through personalized digital coaching

Bridge the digital divide in areas that are unserved or underserved

Create a network of publicly accessible spaces to access high speed Internet

The Digital Coach Programs will be designed to provide a physical space to conduct digital literacy training and one-on-one assistance as well as a lending library for devices to enhance access to high-speed Internet for the community.

This report provides an overview of Beaver County's Digital Coach Program highlighting:

Overview of Existing Digital Navigator Programs

Beaver County's Digital Navigator Program: Mission, Values, and Goals

Program Concept and Approach

Programming and Maintenance Plan

Funding Sources

Move it Forward: Guide to the creation of a Beaver County Digital Alliance Coalition

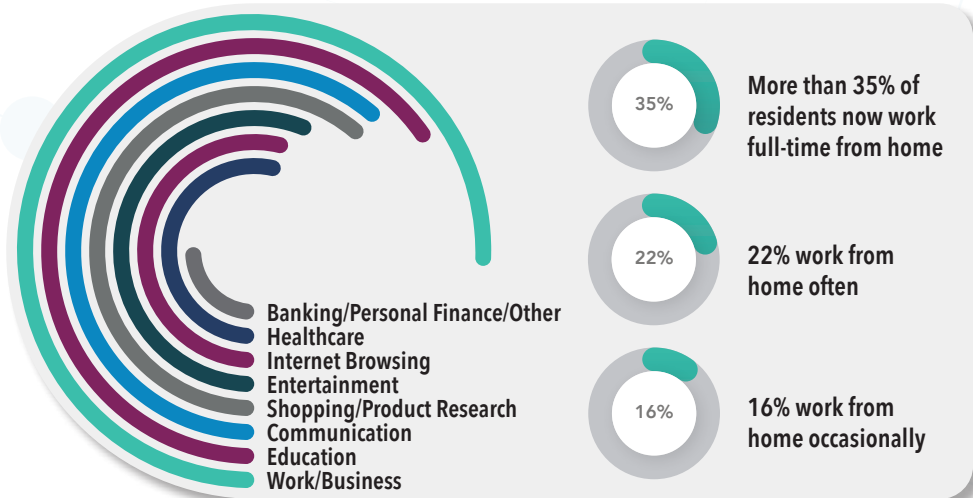# The Importance of Addressing the Digital Divide

The Digital Divide refers to the deep divisions created within our society due to unequal access to the Internet and the resources and opportunities that Internet makes available. Those with reliable Internet access and the skills to use it can participate in social networks, in the workforce, and in a wide range of daily activities through a comfort and ease of their own home. Meanwhile, those who are left out are limited in their employment opportunities, lifestyles, and daily activities. Increasingly in today's digital world:

Job applications often prefer or require online submission.

Jobs increasingly require computer skills for basic job functions.

Remote work opportunities give greater flexibility but are limited to candidates with reliable Internet.

The healthcare sector has seen a net loss in employees, particularly for nursing care and senior care, in recent years. Further, limited clinic hours and long travel distances from more rural residences especially limit how easily some people are able to see a health care provider. Telehealth offers safer, faster care in many non-emergency cases.

Education integrates online resources and programs, to be used on remote school days or used outside of school hours for homework.

Stores and common services offer online services, shopping, and delivery. In some cases, such as banking, those who need in-person assistance pay higher fees than those who can use online systems. In other cases, such as grocery stores, there may be a delivery fee for using online systems but that cost may still be lower than the cost of visiting the store. Seniors and disabled individuals, for example, had a difficult time getting to grocery stores during the pandemic and were at higher risk of health impacts when they did go out.

According to a 2021 countywide survey, 1,930 households in Beaver County are without broadband Internet access. One in four residents needs to travel to other locations to access Wi-Fi, such as coffee shops or libraries.

The following graphic illustrates the primary uses for which high-speed Internet is needed among Beaver County residents, with business operations leading the way.

How do Beaver County Residents Use the Internet?

Banking/Personal Finance/Other
Healthcare
Internet Browsing
Entertainment
Shopping/Product Research
Communication
Education
Work/Business

35% More than 35% of residents now work full-time from home

22% 22% work from home often

16% 16% work from home occasionally

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) describes digital equity as a three-pronged requirement for access, devices, and the knowledge to use them. The NDIA defines key terms as follows:

Digital Equity

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

Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies. This includes five elements:

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

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

The Connect Beaver County initiative recognizes that simply providing infrastructure to access Internet service is not enough to ensure that Beaver County residents can meaningfully use and benefit from the Internet. Residents also need for service to be affordable; they need to be able to afford computers or tablets; and they need to know how to use those.

The Connect Beaver County initiative recognizes that infrastructure alone is not enough to ensure that Beaver County residents have access to – and meaningful and beneficial use of – the Internet. Affordability in both service and devices are vital components as well.

Overview of Existing Digital Navigator Programs

Overview of Existing Digital Navigator Programs

To understand how other cities and organizations have prepared and designed digital navigator programs across the county, an initial review of programs explore how they are structured and how their physical spaces support engagement, accessibility, and learning.

Most digital navigators directly pair users with staff members and focus heavily on the content of the training offered. Few include designated spaces however, which sets Beaver County apart in its attention to providing clear and recognizable spaces designed for this specific purpose.

This research into existing precedents provided the following key observations:

In order to build community trust and engagement, it is recommended that digital navigator programs be housed or located in close proximity to existing community institutions and services with a history of providing assistance to the community. Examples of these types of institutions are libraries, community health centers, social services agencies, and educational/training centers.

The training provided to digital navigators should emphasize trust. It should also recognize the expanded role digital navigators can serve within the context of setting up the physical location. There should be multiple ways that digital navigators can assist community members, such as a classroom assistant, a resource guide, and as an ongoing "Coach" to navigate the digital space. These varying roles can impact how the digital navigator locations are set up in terms of classroom and individual meeting spaces, the technology needed to assist community members in-person or remotely, and the design of the space to feel welcoming and comfortable for community members of all cultures, backgrounds, and languages.

https://eec-wa. org/digital-equity/

It is important to recognize that different geographic contexts have different access to resources and different core issues around digital accessibility and equity. For example, the Washington State Equity in Education Coalition recognized that the digital navigator programs in rural communities were different from those in urban communities. Rural communities were likely to have the hardware, but not the Internet access, and the opposite can be said about urban communities. But these programs were able to adapt and address the specific issues that were greatly troubling their communities. In Washington State's case, the existing digital navigator programs served as a touchstone that identified the largest gaps in digital equity. In response to this, the Digital Inclusion Action Team, a division of the Connect Washington Coalition (CWC), modified its program to include bulk technology purchases, e.g., laptops and hotspots, and the implementation of 20 Digital Navigators across the state. Additionally, the CWC solicited proposals for direct service projects aimed at addressing the key issues facing underserved and vulnerable residents, as well as creating a statewide digital equity dashboard to better determine the areas most in need of broadband access and services.

For how these key considerations have been integrated into the design and service delivery of digital navigator programs nationwide the following examples are highlighted:

Rural LISC Digital Navigators

https://www.lisc.org/rural/our-work/broadband-infrastructure/digital-navigators/

An organization that helps integrate and fund digital navigator programs in rural communities. Efforts to train a fire station and a cultural heritage center to refer locals to the digital navigator program in their rural community have successfully reached more people. By raising awareness, communities can learn and help build a social safety net for those without technology education. Digital navigators can become a formal part of job descriptions in diverse roles at more organizations moving forward so as to create spaces in communities that are better integrated with individuals' daily lives.

JVS Boston Digital Navigator Program

https://edtech.worlded.org/digital-navigators-adaptability-key-in-design/

One of the largest workforce development organizations in New England, it developed a digital navigator program early in the COVID-19 pandemic when many of their students had trouble using communication apps like Zoom and WhatsApp and some lacked Internet access and devices. By summer 2020, as the attendance in some of their classes began to decline, JVS started having trained bilingual digital navigators attend classes to help students remotely onboard via a variety of apps, such as one-on-one sessions after class or during class in a breakout room. Navigators assist students with day-to-day digital inclusion problems and coach them on how to use the programs more proficiently. Navigators are evolving to become classroom assistants, having an even more direct role in the students' learning.

Digital Charlotte

https://www.charlottedigitalinclusionalliance.org/playbook.html

Initially, Digital Charlotte's navigator program was managed as a resource center, connecting their clients to the right organizations that could solve the client's issues best. However, once they were up and running, they realized that many problems have multiple layers such as clients needing both a device and Internet access. As a result, Digital Charlotte's digital navigators have adapted into the role of guide—supporting clients through each step—rather than merely sending them off with referrals without ensuring all their digital inclusion needs are met.

Washington State Equity in Education Coalition

https://eec-wa.org/digital-equity/

Developing trust with a client can be difficult, especially with clients who experience systemic racism. The Equity in Education Coalition (EEC) in Washington state collaborates with multiple community-trusted institutions to accomplish this. EEC, alongside many other organizations, handed out PPE, hand sanitizer, and other essentials to help communities statewide during the pandemic. Therefore, once these trusted organizations integrated the Digital Navigator Program into their systems, individuals were not hesitant to seek their support to get access to the Internet and necessary devices.

Affordability Programs

Affordability Programs

A key part of the Beaver County Broadband Program is to help current residents with the cost of Internet access.

Federal Programs

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has implemented a program to ensure households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare, and more.

The Affordable Connectivity Program can provide

up to
$30 per month

toward Internet service for eligible households

up to
$75 per month

for households on qualifying Tribal lands

Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of

up to
$100

for purchase of eligible devices from participating providers**

The program is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

**Participating providers must contribute $10-$50 toward the purchase price

A household is eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program if the household income is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, or if a member of the household meets at least one of the criteria below:

- Participates in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, SSI, WIC, or Lifeline

- Participates in Tribal specific programs, such as Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

- Participates in the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision

- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year

- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income Internet program

Learn more about eligibility, participating providers, and more on [FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program webpage](#).
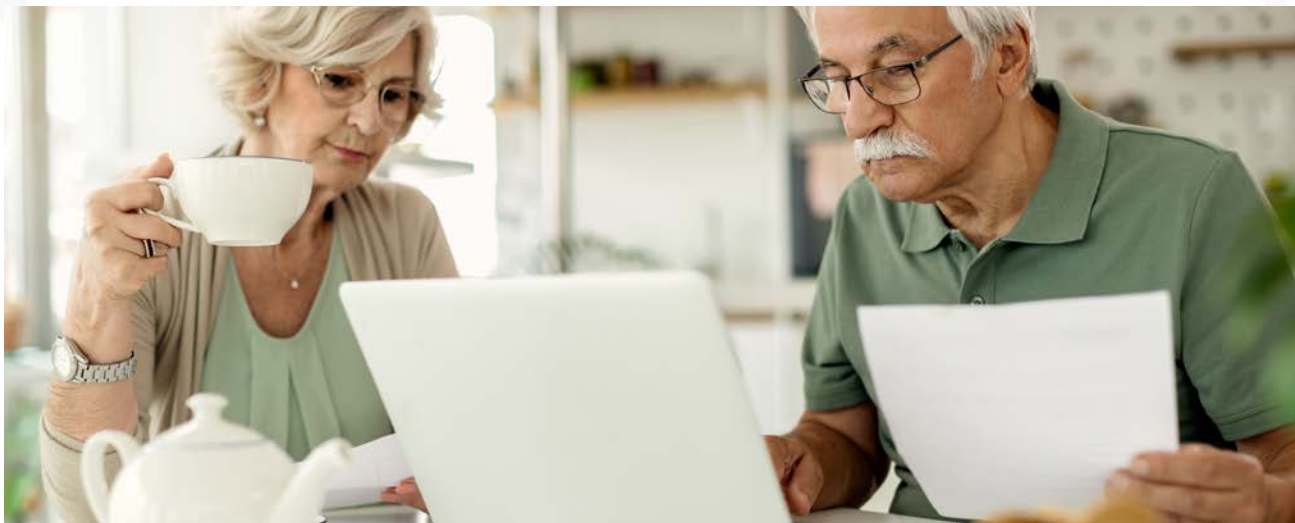
Applying for the ACP can be difficult for those who need it most.

In Pennsylvania, only

34.4%

of eligible households have enrolled in this program

Fewer than

HALF

have successfully claimed the benefit as of October 2022

Source: https://apps.communitynets.org/acpdashboard/

In Beaver County

5,842

households enrolled as of October 2022

Source: Universal Service Administrative Co., ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker

What keeps residents from using this benefit?

An email address is required to apply. Many seniors don't have an email address or know how to create one.

The application requires multiple steps. Users must create an account through the National Verifier website; apply through the ACP sign-up portal, then contact their Internet Service Provider to apply the benefit.

Proof of eligibility requires uploading personal documents. This may require access to a scanner and knowledge of how to use it. Even if they have digital documents, knowing how to save and upload PDFs can be challenging for those with limited digital skills.

Sharing this much personal data can be scary for many. Residents who don't understand Internet safety are more likely to simply avoid this process out of caution.

Digital navigators can help walk residents through this process, and help them successfully access and obtain the many opportunities and programs available online.

FCC Lifeline Program

FCC's Lifeline program provides monthly discounts for telephone service, broadband Internet, or bundled voice-broadband services to ensure everyone has access to jobs, healthcare, and educational resources. Lifeline is available to households with income under 135% of the federal poverty level.

If your household is eligible, you can receive:

- Up to a $9.25/month discount on phone, Internet, or bundled services

Learn more about program rules, FAQs, and more on [FCC's LifeLine webpage](). Households that are eligible for Lifeline are automatically eligible for the ACP, which provides a greater benefit.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Programs

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does not have affordability programs available to consumers at large. However, there are several funding sources that can support future programs including digital navigator services.

Utility Assistance Programs

Consider partnering with the PA PUC to add broadband to list of [Utility Assistance Programs]().

Pennsylvania State Equity Capacity Grant Program

Under this new federal program, Pennsylvania will receive a series of annual grants to implement the statewide digital equity capacity grant program. Information about how these funds will be distributed is forthcoming. The state will create a Digital Equity Plan in 2023, and allocate funds to local partners and entities after that time to implement and operate programs and services that support and increase digital literacy, inclusion, and equity.

L&I Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Grant Program

Digital Literacy and Workforce Development grants provide funds to support effective programs that help individuals improve their job search capabilities and increase access to employment postings; gain access to employment with family-sustaining wages; and increase communities' capacity for providing foundational digital literacy skills. Acquiring these skills will prepare Pennsylvania job seekers and employees for success in the 21st century labor market. This program has closed for 2022 but has offered annual cycles in past years, so additional funding may be provided in 2023 for another round.

Best Practices to Offset Internet Service Provider Bills for Low-income Populations

ISP Low-income Programs

Some states provide clear, easy-to-use guides to all ISPs who participate in low-income programs or provide their own low-cost plan. In Beaver County, all ISPs participate in the ACP. Beyond this program, very few ISPs in Beaver County offer noticeably low-cost plans. The one exception is Comcast's [Xfinity - Internet Essentials](#), which costs $9.95 per month and can be further combined with the ACP discount to make service free to the user. However, this subscription does have speed limitations that are below the current recommended speed for broadband, which is 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload per second.

County-led Practices

The Connect Beaver County initiative involves major infrastructure investments that begin by identifying areas for new fiber deployment and seeking bids from ISPs to construct and deploy these projects, with funding provided in partnership with the County. This places the County in a position to select winning bids and award county funds to ISP partners who demonstrate investment in digital equity. Scoring for construction bids includes points for the inclusion of activities

such as participating in the ACP, assisting customers with ACP applications, providing alternative low-cost, non-income-based plans, and discounts for select groups such as veterans or teachers. There are also activities not eligible for a score; one-time sign-up offers, e.g., an adjustable low-cost plan that rises in price after the initial trial period, will not be counted. Best affordability practices dictate that the County should only incentivize affordability measures that are both transparent and sustainable.

Application Best Practices

Many programs require customers to have income under Federal Poverty Guidelines with enrollment in existing low-income support programs, like:

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

- Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the NSLP

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) - for applicants age 65+ only

However, many people in these programs also have limited access to the Internet, to Internet-enabled devices, and lack digital literacy skills. Application processes should be simple and streamlined as much as possible and require minimal Internet skill to facilitate sign-ups. Lengthy applications to prove poverty are stigmatizing, and complicated web-based forms are impossible for those who have never had the chance to learn Internet skills.

Qualification Best Practices

In designing or incentivizing any affordability program, it's important to recognize that many residents don't qualify for true low-income plans but may still struggle with market rate plans that may be $80/month, $100/month, or even higher. True affordability programs should include:

- Low-cost options that are available to the general public

- Clear terms and conditions

- Free or low-cost equipment and installation costs

- Clear and accurate description of speed of service offered at this price

Program Initiation

Program Initiation

Mission Statement

The Connect Beaver County Broadband Program is preparing to launch a Digital Coach program to bring improved Internet access and digital coaching opportunities to residents across the county. By connecting with trained Digital Coaches, the program will provide training and guidance for residents who seek support in learning how to use the Internet, navigating online platforms and services, gaining job skills, and more.

Values & Goals

The spatial design of Digital Coach spaces aims to be accessible and welcoming and ensure users' comfort in utilizing them. The program is geared towards people with little to no experience with computers and acknowledges that this population largely overlaps with those who are marginalized in other ways, as well. Mistrust of technology, fear of surveillance, incarceration and lack of access, poverty, and lack of education are all common factors, and users may feel insecure about their inexperience with computer use. Ensuring that the location is easy to find and instills a sense of comfort is a high priority for the program and the space that hosts it.

Key values for the design of a Digital Coach space are:

- Comfort – Create a comforting atmosphere that puts users at ease
- Natural light
- Plants
- Inviting color scheme with bright colors incorporated
- Table and seating space easy to locate
- Accessibility – Have tools and furniture that accommodate people of all abilities
- Equip spaces with screen readers, headphones, read-out-loud applications, or other aids
- Bright and dim lighting options or adjustable lighting
- Wheelchair accessible tables with an appropriate height and room for the chair to approach without obstacles
- Other accessible devices or software as suits the intended users

- Privacy – Consider privacy concerns of intended users
- Open spaces can be comforting to some and encourage more discussion/learning/asking questions
- Enclosed spaces can be more comfortable for taking classes, using adaptive aids, doing banking or activities that require private information, etc.
- Flexibility – Leave space for additional resources
- Coordinate with programs that offer device rental
- Provide how-to-guides as references
- Conduct demonstration sessions and classes, ideally held in the same space
- Branding – For program visibility
- Clear, legible, recognizable signage that indicates the program, hours, and use
- A consistent design appearance helps make Digital Coach recognizable in any setting

Concept and Approach

Beaver County is planning to install a series of Digital Coach spaces that offer on-site staff, weekly programming, and reservable one-on-one sessions for users to receive the assistance of a trained Digital Coach.

Key Services

The following key services will be offered:

Digital Skills Assessment

Clients will be offered a Digital Needs Assessment to see what digital skills they have and where they need the most help. This assessment will ensure assistance is provided at a level the client can understand. It will be available online during the reservation process, and in-person with the Digital Coach staff. It will be very clear, however, that this assessment is not required to make an appointment and is only available as an option to help clients communicate their needs to the Digital Coach. Requiring an assessment could be viewed as a deterrent by potential clients who lack the skills or the comfort level to fill it out.

One-on-One Technical Assistance with a Digital Coach

Whether clients need assistance with learning to save files, booking a telehealth appointment or sending photos, a Digital Coach will be there to help. Every client has unique needs and challenges, and Coaches will work with them one-on-one to improve their digital literacy and solve their technology challenges. Digital Coaches will take the time to learn the needs of clients, what challenges clients are facing, and devise a plan to help them achieve success. Digital Coaches will be available through both booked appointment times and walk-in assistance at various locations throughout Beaver County.

Educational Opportunities

Seminars and workshops on various technology topics will be held. Topics will include Using an Internet Browser, Creating and Using an Email Account, Digital Tools for Everyday Tasks, Using Tech Tools to Create a Budget, and much more. Upon completion of the seminar, each participant will receive a Certificate of Completion. These seminars and workshops will be held at various locations throughout the county.

Connections

A Resource Guide will be created and maintained to share other resources that clients may find valuable but do not know they exist or are unsure of how to apply. These resources would include contact and application information for organizations that offer legal assistance, utility payment assistance, Internet, and more.

Clients need access to computers, tablets, scanners, and printers. Locations throughout Beaver County will provide these digital tools.

Spatial Prototypes

The Beaver County Digital Coach spaces are meant to be integrated into an existing facility or location and will be customizable to that host space's dimensions and characteristics. Essential to every space is that they are accessible, inclusive, and welcoming to all users. Depending on the site's size, operating hours, and general capacity, the Digital Coach space can pursue the following prototypes:

Storefront (Pop-up)	Utilizes an existing room and adds visually recognizable design elements
Basic	Basic pod model with a table and seating in a semi-enclosed area with ability to close doors
Basic Plus	Includes the Basic prototype plus buffering for comfort, user privacy, and visibility
Expanded	Includes the Basic prototype within a more permanent structure or room that provides expanded functionality and use throughout the day
Integrated	Includes the Basic prototype within a larger setting that offers further programs and amenities that complement the Coach station

The Storefront prototype is the simplest design proposed. It uses an existing room within the selected building, ideally one that is underused or unused. Visibility from a main space is recommended so that visitors will be able to see the Digital Coach easily. Transparency in the wall material, or the ability to easily leave the door open, is also preferred to allow unimpeded view into the room when not actively in use for a private session. The Storefront prototype takes a minimal amount of investment and does not require a permanent change to the building design or layout. The lack of a consistent and specific design that matches Digital Coach spaces installed in other locations, however, may also make the services less obviously recognizable as part of the program. Large signage, similar furnishings and color scheme, and minor design details such as lighting selection and use of potted plants are encouraged to increase cohesion with other Digital Coach spaces. A table, accessible seating space for two people to sit side-by-side or across a table as best suits their comfort level, a lockable cabinet to store equipment, and comfortable levels of lighting are required elements.

Approximate space needed: 10' x 10' or larger ideal

Suited for:

⏱ Limited hours	⚙ Limited use	✅ Safe, monitored space	🔒 Lockable

PROS ✚

- Utilizes an available room with no construction needed

- Minimal impact on the existing building

- Low cost: only minor decorative items are needed, not structures

CONS ▬

- Less recognizable than the more intentionally designed spaces

- Existing room may still feel cloistered or dated and less comfortable than envisioned

FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING ~

- When not in use, the Storefront may fulfill other uses or locked and closed

- Good for temporary installation if a location wishes to test interest

STOREFRONT

ENTRANCE

SPATIAL PROTOTYPE: BASIC

The Basic prototype proposes a pod design. It is semi-enclosed with walls, table, and seating that appear welcoming, provide accessible space for two people to sit side-by-side or across a table as best suits their comfort level, and has a distinctive design that is recognizable when used in multiple locations. The semi-enclosed nature makes it appear cozy and provides some privacy, without requiring a large space or becoming claustrophobic in a small one. The use of walls ensures that no one can read personal information over the shoulder of a user visiting a Coach. Attractive and consistent colors, signage, and branding can be incorporated into the pod through materials and upholstery, as well as painted branding. The pod could utilize modular panels for flexible sizing or be a standalone unit uniform across each location. In all cases, if the seating is built-in, space for a wheelchair user to reach the table on one side must be maintained.

Approximate space needed: 10'x 10'

Suited for:

Limited hours	Limited use	Safe, monitored space	Moveable

PROS
+

- Small space

- Set on wheels for flexible placement

- Fire stations, municipal buildings, YMCA, police, mall - any location with limited hours and space available

CONS
—

- Very open placement can be uncomfortable in busy or loud areas

FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING
~

- When not in use, the Basic may be used as a general seating area

- Pair with nearby benches and tables for a quiet space for visitors or employees
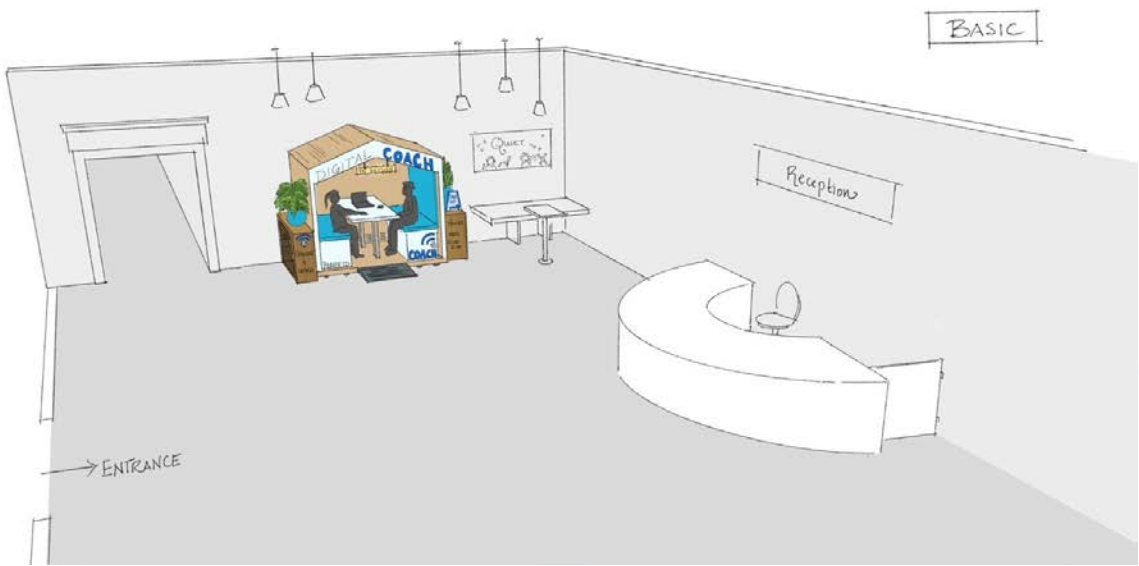
SPATIAL PROTOTYPE: BASIC PLUS

The Basic Plus prototype uses the Basic pod and reserves additional space around it. The added space should be clearly linked to the Digital Coach in design and layout but may be achieved with minor decorative elements. For example, a large rug and moveable planters are non-permanent interventions that can be used with a consistent color scheme and signage to clearly define a larger Digital Coach area but can be moved if the space needs to be repurposed for occasional events. Along with some tables and chairs, the larger buffer space creates some privacy for the Coach station, mitigating potential interruptions from adjacent noise or foot traffic in the building. This layout also provides extra seating for users waiting their turn or practicing after an appointment, or for their children to wait and play within easy view while they meet with a Coach.

Approximate space needed: 10'x 20'

Suited for:

| | Limited hours | | Privacy and quiet are not major concerns on site | | Safe, monitored space |

Additional privacy and functionality possible within the expanded space

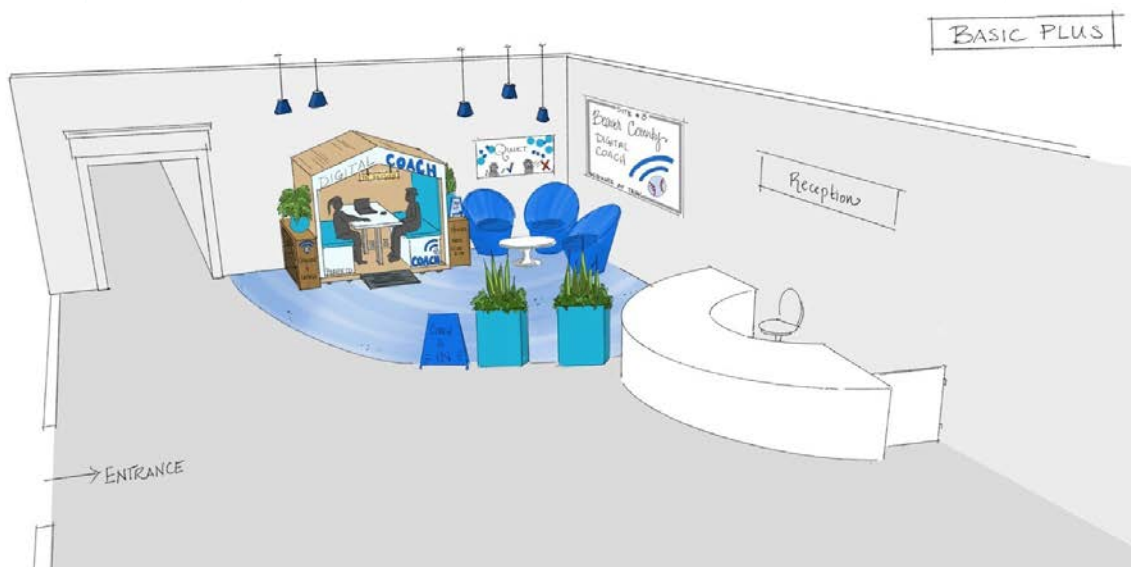| PROS +	CONS −	FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING ~
■ Small space	■ May still be uncomfortable in busy or loud areas	■ When not in use, use as a general seating area
■ Set on wheels for flexible placement		
■ Fire stations, municipal buildings, YMCA, police, mall - any location with limited hours and space available		

BASIC PLUS

ENTRANCE

SPATIAL PROTOTYPE: EXPANDED

The Expanded prototype uses the Basic pod and embeds it into a private room. The inclusion of physical walls and door(s) allows a greater degree of privacy, expanding the pod's use for activities that require more user privacy, such as telehealth appointments or online courses. This prototype would permit a Coach to assist users with personal matters or to discuss sensitive information, whether the tasks involve typed information or voice calls. Further, the privacy this allows will be appreciated by some users who are uncomfortable with the possibility of even non-sensitive information being visible, or those self-conscious about utilizing the Digital Coach program.

The Expanded prototype requires a more permanent structure but has a lot of flexibility in construction materials, including metal, glass, or wood. A modular product will facilitate similar, recognizable constructions across different locations. Important design considerations are the ability to be open and very visible to create a welcoming environment, while also having closable doors that block view and sound for privacy concerns. The Basic pod can still be used within the room to create a clearly designated Coach space and allow other users to sit alongside when privacy is not a concern. This layout also provides extra seating for users waiting their turn or practicing after an appointment, or for their children to wait and play within easy view while they meet with a Coach.

Approximate space needed: at least 10'x 20'

Suited for:

🕐 Any hours	Wide/flexible uses	Designated space is available

| PROS +	CONS −	FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING ~
■ Greater enclosure allows more privacy and comfort regardless of noise or activity nearby ■ Enclosure may be glass, or other moveable wall materials	■ Requires more space and permanent structure ■ More expensive to install	■ When not in use, may be used as conference space or lounge ■ In schools: may be ideal as a "calm room" ■ Consider as a "safe transaction space"

EXPANDED

Reception

ENTRANCE
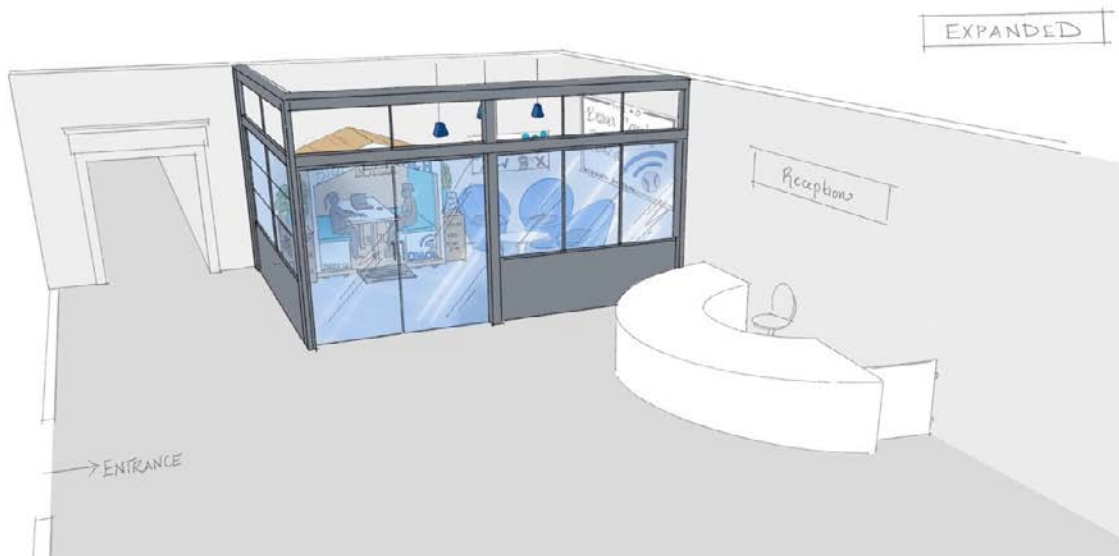
The Integrated prototype includes the Basic pod within a larger space, supporting a more complete range of services and programming, as well as a higher service capacity. This prototype is highly preferred by all stakeholders consulted throughout the planning process. While the Digital Coach fills an important need, the ability to host larger classes and trainings, as well as operate equipment rentals or device sharing, are also very important to meeting users' needs. The Digital Coach program, as envisioned through this prototype, is not well situated to take on large-scale equipment rental; however, an integrated model supports collaboration with other services, such as those offered through a library or community center. This limitation acknowledges that an integrated "one-stop-shop" for digital services and programs is ideal in promoting the Digital Coach program for those residents who are most likely to need coaching in the first place.

Approximate space needed: at least 10'x 20'

Suited for:

| ⏱ Limited hours | ↻ Wide/flexible space | 🌐 Other digital programs and services supported |

PROS +

- Greater enclosure allows more privacy and comfort regardless of noise or activity nearby

- Includes a computer lab, equipment rental, regular staff, classes/training, etc.

CONS −

- Requires more space and permanent structure

- Most suited to a library, school, or community space with supporting programs and services

FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING ~

- When not in use, may be used as a reading room

- In schools: may be ideal as a "calm room" or assisted learning/tutoring space

Location Considerations

Programming of the Digital Coach spaces will be influenced not only by spatial characteristics of the site but also by the site's general operations, the expected service users, and the site's location and proximity to other types of services/amenities. Key location factors considered were:

Transit access: Offering Digital Coach stations along bus routes enables residents without vehicles or with limited access to utilize the services. This addresses the needs of Beaver County residents who live in more urban areas and in the river towns, and with limited vehicle access and/or limited incomes to cover reliable personal transportation. Providing Digital Coaches along bus routes gives users transportation choices and ensures that vehicle ownership is not a barrier.

Rural and urban locations: A mix of urban and rural locations is ideal in order to reach a wide and diverse population. In urban areas, services may reach more people because of the denser population. In rural areas, services may reach fewer people within the same distance, but meet critical needs where no other services exist.

Population served: In selecting all potential locations, surrounding available services were gauged to understand whether the Digital Coach was addressing known needs or duplicating programs already available.

Accessibility of the building and the location: As public and community-focused spaces were assessed for suitability, close attention was paid to the accessibility and layout of the building. Locations with restrooms on the main floor, accessible and easy-to-find entrances, hours of operation that are regularly scheduled and meet the programming needs of Digital Coaches, available space to include a Digital Coach station, and easy access by car and/or by bus were considered to ensure the Digital Coach space would be accessible and comfortable to all users.

Opportunities to share resources: Locating Digital Coaches in buildings that already host other community functions and are frequented by target users ensures the program's likelihood of success. If the users already go to the given building, they are more likely to feel comfortable there; to see that services are offered; and to be able to sync their trips to the Digital Coach with other activities. For many potential users who have limited time, mobility, or finances to travel, this ability to access coaching along their usual routes is highly valuable.

The following building types were assessed for suitability and specific considerations:

Municipal Buildings

Place the Digital Coach in a quiet area, visible from entry but not within a shared public entryway, if possible. If visibility from entrance is not possible, place with visibility from a commonly passed area such as a conference room or off a core hallway, with clear signage in the entrance and along the walking path. This building type is likely to attract predominantly seniors.

Fire Stations and Police Stations

Placement of the Digital Coach should be more private or enclosed to ensure a buffer from noise and public activities. Exact placement and specifications will need to be designed in collaboration with the fire and police stations to determine best fit without impeding operational needs. This building type is likely to feel unwelcoming to many of the intended users and is not recommended as a primary location choice.

Libraries and Community Centers

The Digital Coach should be near the computer lab facilities and within view of the checkout, if possible. These locations are ideal for seniors and for parents seeking assistance with their children in tow, especially as these centers likely already offer complementary services and programs aligned with the Digital Coach's mission.

YMCA and Mall

Placement should be centrally located within facility and may be open at later hours than their municipal counterparts. Unless a nearby dedicated staff member can be assigned to oversee the space, there may be less oversight during "off hours" so all items may require additional security mechanisms. In Beaver County, existing digital training programs offered at the mall make this a viable location to consider.

Schools

School locations allow collaborations with students serving as Coaches, and benefit from existing onsite computers and related technology. Operation may be limited to midday hours and/or immediately after school hours, however, and be impacted by school holidays and summer breaks. Liabilities with allowing visitors onto school property may cause issues in meeting school safety requirements while serving vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Initial Launch Plan

The recommendation for an initial launch phase is to select only several sites and prioritize a robust program rollout, rather than maximizing locations. By identifying locations with readily available space and existing demand for the Digital Coach services, the program can be implemented quickly and refined throughout the launch phase before adding additional sites.

As sites are identified for the installation of a Digital Coach space and related programming, a contractual agreement should be prepared between the Operating Entity and the Location to identify:

Duration of the Digital Coach installment and provision of regular programming. Minimum commitment of one year is recommended.
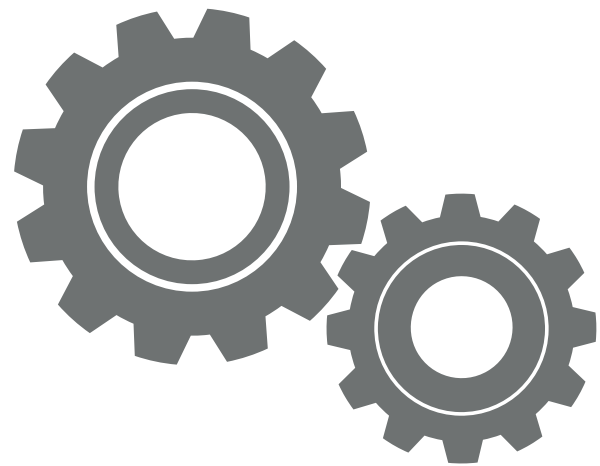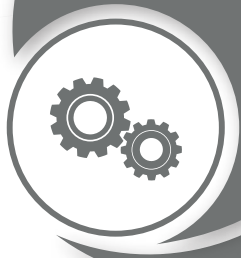
Plan for building access and space maintenance when not in active Digital Coaching use.

Agreement upon hours and days of use, including a plan for how changes in schedule will be addressed as needed.

Programming and Maintenance Plan

Programming and Maintenance Plan

Guidelines on use of ARPA Funds

The Digital Coach will use federal funds provided to Beaver County through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds can be used for the program's installation, materials, and maintenance, but funds must be allocated by 2024. A contract with an Operating Entity must also be set in place by 2024.

Funds must be spent by 2026 under the ARPA guidelines. Beaver County will serve as the incubator for this program and provide the initiation costs through 2026. Beyond 2026, more stable long-term funding sources will be needed to maintain the program.

Partnership with Tech2Elevate

Tech2Elevate is a nonprofit that has emerged as a potential Operating Entity for this program. It is an affiliate of Paramount Pursuits, which serves as a small business incubator and economic development consulting partner within local communities in Beaver County.

Tech2Elevate has indicated the willingness and capacity to take on responsibility for the Digital Coach program's operations starting at launch time, as well as securing funding beyond 2026. If selected by the County, this nonprofit will be considered the Operating Entity.

Program Components

Core Programming: Digital Coach Staffed Coaching Sessions

Staffed coaching sessions will pair individuals seeking assistance, with using or understanding how to accomplish tasks on the Internet and/or on a computer, with a trained staff member who will serve as a Digital Coach. The Digital Coach thus refers to the program as a whole and the individual person assisting a user at any given time; the Digital Coach station refers to the space in which assistance is provided at regularly scheduled times. Digital Coaches will offer two primary types of assistance:

Digital Skills Assessment

A basic assessment will be prepared for users to take. This will be completely optional, but will help Digital Coaches tailor each session to the user's abilities and needs. This assessment can be conducted in person at the start of a session, or taken online in advance, if possible, to better prepare Digital Coaches to directly address the user's specific questions and concerns.

One-on-one Technical Assistance

When a user visits the Digital Coach station and meets with an assigned Digital Coach, they will have dedicated time with the Coach to ask questions, ask for task assistance, and conduct tasks alongside the Coach to learn how to use computers and/or software. Reservations for technical assistance will have a designated time slot and duration, while walk-ins may be limited in time according to current demand. Technical assistance will include basic computer use, assistance in navigating websites and finding or filling out information as needed and learning how to use common software programs.

Supporting Programming

Open Use Hours of Digital Coach Space

A contract for Digital Coach programming is needed between the Operating Entity to define building access, space maintenance, and service times. Each location's contract will need to identify how or when the station can be left open for casual drop-in use and when it should be marked and/or roped off as "closed." Open use means the space may be used for seating, eating, and casual use of devices outside of operational hours. There is a risk of damage or mess, so a plan should be in place to maintain and clean the space. Liability should be on the host location to determine if the station can be left open safely; liabilities include broken or damaged items and messes such as food left, theft, and vandalism. Digital Coach staff should be responsible for checking that the space is clean and orderly upon arrival and departure and report major maintenance needs to Operating Entity.

Computer and Hotspot Rental

Equipment rentals will be coordinated through either an external partner who donates and manages devices, or the host location if provided by their programming. Computer rentals at a library or community center are ideal. Anticipate theft, loss, and damage within the long-term funding plan.

Device Giveaway

Equipment donations will be coordinated through either an external partner who donates and manages devices. Funding and sourcing must allow for giveaways.

Coach Training Certification Course

A certification course is needed for volunteers and staff who serve as Digital Coaches. The training will include basic guidance on language to assist Coaches in understanding common user issues and how to provide clear communication consistently and accurately to those who visit the coaching stations.

Upon completion, a certificate will be given to those who complete the training to recognize their service and document their possession of skills to educate others in digital literacy. This certificate may also be used in partnership with schools or service programs to give recognizable and legitimate credit to those who participate, such as being applied to community service requirements or used in college applications.

Digital Access Certification Course: Multiple Levels Possible

A certification course for Digital Coach users will be structured along common issues and needs, and be provided to those who complete coaching as a testament to their skills. This certification will indicate that they have basic skills in using a computer and accessing Internet. It may be structured into levels that allow a "basic access" certification, with subsequent levels of understanding in core applications such as email or Microsoft Word. This documentation can be provided to employers, for example, to bolster the user's workforce opportunities. Course content may need to be revised periodically to keep up with changes in user needs and common technology.

Digital Coach Coalition Member Certificate

A Digital Coach Coalition is a team-based structure that gives open recognition to organizations, host locations, and other partners who support the Digital Coach Program, via funding or otherwise. The creation of a Coalition enhances the visibility and prominence of the program, rewarding supporters with positive press and acknowledgement to elicit continued support.

Online Reservation system

Conduct scheduled seminars and workshops on common topics in or near Digital Coach stations, in locations with sufficient space to support multiple attendees at one time.

Program Operational Guide

Program	County ARPA Funding Allocation	Operational Responsibility
Digital Coach Staffed Coaching Sessions	**yes**	**Operating Entity**
Digital Coach Open Use Hours	**yes**	**Host Location**
Computer Rental		Operating Entity to lead, with partners
Hotspot Rental		Operating Entity to lead, with partners
Device Giveaway		Operating Entity to lead, with partners
Coach Training Certification Course	**yes**	**Operating Entity, other educational partners**
Digital Access Certification Courses	**yes**	**Operating Entity, other educational partners**
Digital Coach Coalition Member Certificate	**yes**	**County**
Online Reservation System		Operating Entity
Seminars and Workshops on Frequent Topics		Operating Entity

Material Components

Core Program Materials

Onsite maintenance is ideal for minor cleaning and tidying, as well as reporting damage. The County and Operating Entity will need to formalize an agreement on assigning "ownership"; said owner would be responsible for repairs and replacements.

Digital Coach pod structure: Physical structure installed in host locations including any wall, door, and fixed seating elements.

Digital Coach signage & branding: Physical structure installed in host locations including any wall, door, and fixed seating elements.

Coach computers: 2 computers per station that remain at the Coach station for the Coach and 1 for the user for side-by-side for training.

- Built in camera and audio, and video conference capability, are required
- Enable large text on screens. Have printed out clear instructions for how to change text size and screen brightness

Lockable cabinet: To store the computers and related devices outside of coaching sessions.

Computer mouse: 2 minimum, to provide more accessibility and assist with training purposes during coaching.

Additional accessory items to provide more accessibility and assist with training purposes during Coaching:

- Headphones (1 per station)
- USB drives (minimum 1 in stock per station)
- Ipad or tablets (minimum 1 per station is recommended to allow coaching on this device type when needed). Tablets should be set up for easy senior use (i.e. text size) and have common apps for services and social connectivity pre-installed to aid with coaching instruction
- CD/DVD drive (1 pack per station)
- Notebooks and pens (minimum 1 pack in stock per station)

Digital Coach website: Used for promotional purposes and for the online reservation system.

Access to IT services: Needed short term to support the program launch and may be prepared in collaboration with County IT services.

Resource Guide: Resource Guide

WiFi that offers non-static IP addresses
In many of the libraries, WiFi through the school district has created security settings that result in static IP addresses for the library computers. Many online forms, including state forms such as unemployment, have been rejecting applications submitted through library computers because they interpret the IP address as having already been used by another applicant. The Digital Coaches should be equipped with their own WiFi at locations that do not already offer sufficient WiFi capability.

Supporting Program Materials

These materials are suggested as supplementary to the Digital Coach but are not part of the core Digital Coach program. These will not be provided or owned by the County. They may be provided by Operating Entity or available onsite through the host location where these items are already in use.

Printers

Scanners

Software
(Google suite products, Adobe products, and Canva are common examples)

Rentable Computers

Operational Components

Operational needs for the Digital Coach program include staffing for the Digital Coaches; staff management, including scheduling and payments; administrative needs to maintain and pursue continued partnerships, funding sources, and contractual agreements; and marketing needs to maintain and promote the program.

Staff needs may fluctuate over time as the program grows to meet demand, and all staff needs will be managed through Operating Entity. Initial expectations are:

Staff: Coaches
Coaches will be needed to staff each location during every hour of use. Several alternating Coaches are recommended during the launch phase to allow each location to be staffed as needed. Not all Coaches may need to be paid staff, however, if volunteer partnerships can be developed.

Staff: Program Director
A Program Director will be needed once the program reaches a substantial number of locations and/or hours in use per week. During the initial launch phase, a designated staff role is not expected to be required.

Staff: Marketing Coordinator
A Marketing Coordinator will be needed once the program reaches a substantial number of locations and/or hours in use per week. During the initial launch phase, a designated staff role is not expected to be required; however, marketing plays a critical role in establishing the program's success. A part-time or contractual position is encouraged leading up to and throughout the launch phase.

Staff: Administrative Assistant
An Administrative Assistant will be needed once the program reaches a substantial number of locations and/or hours in use per week. During the initial launch phase, a designated staff role is not expected to be required. As the program grows, the Administrative Assistant or Program Director may be interchangeable or when both roles are needed individually.

Volunteer: Coaches
The County will work with Operating Entity to facilitate continued partnerships. Pair volunteers with certification programs. Literacy Pittsburgh, corporations with large employment presence in the County, education institutions, and high schools are recommended partners for developing volunteer collaborations.

Interns
The County will work with Operating Entity to facilitate continued partnerships. Pair interns with certification programs. Local job training programs, schools, and the Office of Vocation & Rehabilitation are recommended partners. Interns would be paid through Operating Entity or through their sponsor program and may be compensated through credits depending on the structure of their sponsor program.

Staff Operational Guide

Staffing	County ARPA Funding Allocation	Responsibility (as employer)
Staff: Program Director	**yes**	**Operating Entity**
Staff: Marketing Coordinator		Operating Entity
Staff: Administrative Assistant		Operating Entity
Staff: Coaches	**yes**	**Operating Entity**
Volunteer: Coaches		Operating Entity, partners
Interns		Operating Entity, partners

Staff and Training Considerations

Background Clearances are needed. This is a liability concern for the Digital Coach program to anticipate. Coaches, whether paid or volunteer, should complete a background clearance to ensure the safety of program users, many of whom may be from marginalized populations and at higher risk of harm.

Sensitivity Training is critical. Similar to above, the potential users of the Digital Coach program may come from backgrounds that were challenging and limited in resources. They may be young parents; seniors; previously incarcerated; undereducated; low income; minority populations; present disabilities; or have experienced any number of struggles in their life that contributed to their limited access to and knowledge of Internet capabilities. It is essential that Digital Coaches possess the training to speak with all individuals clearly and respectfully regardless of their background. Confidentiality is crucial and Coaches must honor that.

Computer and interview skills are obviously important. Digital Coaches must have sufficient knowledge of common online activities, software, and computer uses to be able to answer a range of questions and describe steps clearly during sessions.

Tasks and Skills Needed from Digital Coaches

- Safe navigation of search engines

- Effective use of search engines to locate information

- Use of social media

- Ability to fill out government forms

- Understanding of privacy and securing personal information

- Knowledgeable use of common software

- Knowledgeable use of common devices (including connecting to printers, saving files to a USB device, etc.)

- Support for seniors, home-based businesses, veteran services, and education as commonly requested

- Resume writing sessions

- Workforce training

Ownership and Liability

General allocation of responsibilities and further considerations must be included in contracts with Operating Entity and with host locations. Contractual agreements should include the following:

- Ownership of all materials, including responsibility for maintenance and repair

- Reporting structure for maintenance and repairs as noted by host locations (i.e., in between Digital Coach staffed hours, host locations should still have a responsibility and process to document and report issues that arise)

- Responsibility for Digital Coach materials if used by the host location during "closed" hours

- Access to building and/or responsibility for space during Digital Coach hours when building is otherwise closed

- Duration of the program and expectations for space and hours reserved weekly, to be agreed upon annually with each host location

Certification Programs

The Digital Coach Program will offer certificates to the following groups:

User

User certificates are awarded to individuals who participate in the program. Recognition is based on neither time nor test, but for achievements attained throughout a particular session, e.g., using Microsoft Word or Excel. Receiving a certificate is optional and at the discretion of the user, however, it can be a useful resource for showing the prerequisite skills necessary for employment or entrance into certain education programs.

Coach

Digital Coach certificates are awarded to trained staff and volunteers who participate in the program as coaches. This certification serves two purposes. One, it ensures that coaches have the baseline skills and training needed to provide both step-by-step guidance and assistance to those with varying skill levels. And two, it bolsters resumes or college applications requiring community program or volunteer service work.

Sponsor

Sponsor certifications are awarded in recognition of partner organizations and donors who support the Digital Coach Program. Certificates for sponsorship serve to honor and appreciate the parties and individuals who lend a hand in helping the program succeed. Sponsorship is recognized through several actions, from donating funds and equipment to assistance with marketing and advertising.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Supporting Partners

Stakeholder Collaboration and Supporting Partners

Collaborative partnerships are essential to a successful Digital Coach program. As a service offered to the community, connecting with users in places they already frequent, syncing Coach locations and schedules alongside other services and programs in places that fill supplementary needs, and spreading awareness to a greater population of users who will benefit from this program will help ensure that the program is well used and fills the intended need. Furthermore, a program of this sort is heavily dependent on human participation. Partnerships with organizations or companies that offer volunteer or intern programs can help expand and grow a network of trained Coaches while maximizing available human resources through volunteer or credit-based compensation networks.

Digital Coach Partners fit into three categories:

$ Funding sponsors | Program partnerships | Human resource sponsors (volunteer or intern)

The development of the Digital Coach concepts included stakeholder outreach to a number of Beaver County stakeholder organizations involved in either providing, or representing populations who need access to, digital literacy and technology services across the County. Stakeholder engagement was conducted in June and July:

JUNE 15 2022 — Two in-person listening sessions

JUNE 16 2022 — Two virtual listening sessions

JUNE 22 2022 — Beaver County Libraries Board of Directors Discussion Session & Take-home survey

JULY 2022 — Follow-up discussions and site visits based on listening session input received

Further, as strong interest in this program was expressed by stakeholders and available spaces were discussed, site visits were conducted in August 2022 to further document spatial constraints, building accessibility, existing programs, and other existing conditions that will impact how the program should be designed and operated in each location. As of 2022, eight locations were identified as having strong interest and available space to host a Digital Coach program. These eight locations were guided also by the desired location factors that ensure equitable dispersion across the County and varied access in rural and urban areas, including transit accessibility. It is the County's intent, in working alongside the Operating Entity as well, to continue to expand to further locations once the program is fully established and can support additional staff.

Initial recommended locations consulted throughout the stakeholder engagement and site visit processes are:

- Ambridge Library
- Aliquippa Library
- Beaver County Transit Authority (BCTA) - Rochester Transportation Center and Expressway Travel Center
- Darlington Municipal Building

- Independence Community Center
- Midland Library
- Neighborhood North Museum
- Paramount Pursuits, Ambridge

As the program becomes established, the intent is to grow to meet demands and seek ongoing funding through grants and partnerships. Some additional locations that arose as strong opportunities are:

- Beaver County Courthouse Law Library
- New Brighton Municipal Building

Potential Partners

Potential partners for continued collaboration and partnership include:

- PA Career Link of Beaver County
- The Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board
- Job Training for Beaver County
- Beaver County Collaborative Action Network
- Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development
- Literacy Pittsburgh
- United Way Beaver County
- Private Industry Council
- Community College of Beaver County (CCBC)
- Neighborhood North: Museum of Play
- Beaver County School Districts
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Beaver County Library System
- Lutheran Senior Life
- Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit Inc.
- DCI Career Institute
- Beaver County System of Care
- Beaver County Career and Technology Center

- Circle of Friends
- Penn State Beaver
- Penn State Beaver Extension
- Literacy Pittsburgh (located in the Beaver Valley Mall)
- Geneva College (offers a Student Volunteer Program that offers educational credits)
- Beaver County Career and Technology Center
- PA Cyber
- Office of Aging - Senior Center
- Churches and Catholic Charities (New Bethlehem Church in Independence was noted as a location with small meeting room that is well used)
- Retired Teachers Group of Beaver
- Rotary and 4H clubs
- Girl Scouts
- Robert Morris University: Bayer Center for Non-Profit Management
- Franklin Center in Aliquippa

- Uncommon Grounds
- BCRC – Recovery Center
- Housing Authority
- CDCs: Beaver Falls and Monaca in particular have strong CDCs to engage
- Portage Online Learning
- Midland Innovation + Technology Charter School
- Center for Hope in Ambridge
- YMCA: Beaver and Sewickley locations both support children's programs and the food pantry at the Ambridge Library
- Corporate sponsors (i.e., Range , EQT Corporation, Energy Transfer/ etc. – some of these often sponsor community events or improvements as part of their annual giving programs)
- Office on Aging
- Little Beaver Lions Club in Darlington
- Little Beaver Historical Society in Darlington

Further considerations from stakeholders :

Continue to support library programming and funding needs for technology.	Evening hours are desired, for many users although not generally for seniors.	Consider offering bus vouchers.

Create a Beaver County Digital Alliance Coalition

Create a Beaver County Digital Alliance Coalition

Digital Alliance Coalitions are recognized as a fundamental element of a community's digital advocacy initiatives. Unified by a shared mission, the primary objective of a Digital Alliance is to bring diverse groups together to operate as one entity on behalf of the communities they serve, facilitating coordination between the community, stakeholders and member organizations.

NDIA reports in its Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook that coalitions can vary in size and member organizations, but typically include entities such as local governments, libraries, educational institutions, housing authorities, technology training and network providers, and other social service and civic organizations, and that they should be guided by a document that includes the process for joining, how leaders are selected, the decision-making process, regular meetings, and the rights and responsibilities of member organizations.

Looking into similar entities, the general coalition structure consists of a Steering Committee, Advisory Committee, and a collaborative community of member organizations.

- Steering committee: The governing body that makes decisions regarding coalition priorities, order of business, and the general management of its operations

- Advisory committee*: The body that makes recommendations on specific issues or subjects

- Member organizations: Comprises the several groups that make up the whole organization

*Advisory committees are not always involved

Similar entities include:

Franklin County (OH) Digital Equity Coalition (https://franklincountydigitalequity.org/)

This coalition comprises of more than 30 members representing business, government, education, nonprofit and social sectors. They meet several times a month with the goal of maintaining collective momentum for continued progress. Their mission is to create long-term solutions to digital equity.

Digital Inclusion Network of Portland/Multnomah County (https://portland.gov/oct/digital-equity-strategic-initiatives/din)

This coalition is larger, comprising of more than 50 members representing business, government, education, nonprofit and social sectors. They have a regularly scheduled monthly meeting on the same day and time. Their mission is to raise awareness about digital equity barriers and develop solutions to bridge the digital divide.

Beaver County should consider inviting as Initiating Members the following stakeholders:

Beaver County Board of Commissioners	Townships and municipalities within Beaver County
Beaver County School District members	Beaver County Transit Authority
Beaver County Partnership	Beaver County Libraries
Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Beaver County	Beaver County Planning & Development
Beaver County YMCA	Community College of Beaver County
Boys & Girls Club, Western Pennsylvania	

Appendix

Appendix

Beaver Funding and Resources Appendix

Capital Projects Fund Grant 2023

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) proposes to allocate $200 million of its capital projects funds to establish and implement the Pennsylvania Broadband Infrastructure Program, with an additional $45 million for the Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program and $20 million for the Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program. The collective investment will aim to address the four core challenges facing Pennsylvanians' ability to access or adopt broadband:

- Broadband service infrastructure and availability
- Digital equity and affordability
- Device and technology access
- Digital literacy and technical support

The operational details of the Beaver County Digital Coach Program include providing access to devices, technology and support, and improving digital literacy skills. With the program's chief objective being to assist its residents with developing and strengthening the skills necessary to benefit from the many resources and opportunities the Internet provides, it will benefit greatly from having these select funding sources at their disposal.

Digital Coach sites located at Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs), e.g., public libraries, schools, government buildings, the Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program will offer competitive grant funding for community projects where buildings needed for construction, acquisition or improvement, and that are open to the public and will enable work, education, and health monitoring at the respective facility.

The Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program is new and administered by the Pennsylvania Broadband Office within the Department of Community and Economic Development. This program was created to provide appropriate and affordable access to technology devices, such as laptops, tablets, desktop personal computers, and wi-fi devices. Grant funding will support institutions equipped to distribute devices and equipment through short or long-term loan programs or to be made available for use in public facilities.

Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

The state will be carrying out a statewide plan to provide high-speed access to all households within 5 years. While this is not primarily geared towards digital navigator programs, and instead focuses on deployment of fiber infrastructure, all deployment projects must also be considering how to raise adoption rates and ensure affordability. Programs to assist new users in signing up for, paying for, and learning how to use their newly available internet service can be eligible for BEAD funding especially if they are presented in alignment with new infrastructure being deployed through the BEAD program. Implementation funding anticipated starting in June 2023.

The NTIA has provided detailed guidelines on how BEAD funding may be used, as summarized below.

Eligible projects shall consist of the deployment of wired and/or fixed wireless high-speed broadband service infrastructure in unserved areas of the Commonwealth. An unserved area is defined as a designated geographic area in which households or businesses do not have access to at least 25 Mbps download speed 3 Mbps upload speed.

Upon completion, the project must, at minimum:

- Deliver service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100 Mbps. If it would be impracticable, because of geography, topography, or excessive cost, for a project to deliver services at such a speed, the project must be designed so that it reliably meets or exceeds 100 Mbps download speeds and between 20 Mbps and 100 Mbps upload speeds and be scalable to a minimum of 100 Mbps symmetrical
- Ensure affordability by participating in a federal program that provides low-cost options to consumers (i.e., ACP) and/or establish a low-cost option for consumers based that meets CPF guidance

To the extent an Eligible Entity has funds left over after allocating funds for unserved and underserved areas, it can then use funds as follows:

- Connect and upgrade community anchor institutions such as libraries and community centers that lack a 1 gigabit per second (Gbps) connection or to pursue eligible access-, adoption-, and equity-related uses
- Any other uses approved by the Assistant Secretary that support the BEAD Program's goals, including non-deployment initiatives such as device subsidy programs and digital navigator programs

Digital Equity Act

The Digital Equity Act provides $2.75 billion to establish three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion. They aim to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy. Those eligible include states in the US, Washington DC, Puerto Rico and other US territories, tribal entities and organizations, as well as nonprofit and community organizations appointed as "administering entity" by state Governors. The three programs are:

- State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program: A $60 million grant program for states and territories to develop digital equity plans
- State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program: A $1.44 billion grant program for states and territories. It will fund an annual grant program for five years in support of digital equity projects and the implementation of digital equity plans
- Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program: A $1.25 billion grant program. It will fund annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects

The State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program supports the creation of community-centric solutions. It provides resources to community organizations to help scale digital literacy programs. These programs give people the skills they need to effectively use the Internet. We're looking for projects that promote meaningful adoption and use of high-speed Internet service. Projects should aim to help the following groups:

- Low-income households
- Aging populations
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans

- People with disabilities
- People with language barriers
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Rural inhabitants

To determine the implementation strategy and key activities, States should draw from the findings of the Asset Inventory and Assessment of Needs & Barriers sections of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). States must clearly lay out their strategy, the barriers addressed, measurable goals, corresponding activities, and estimated timeline.

Nonprofits such as Tech2Elevate and other eligible organizations, can expect to pursue two sources created under the DEA: Capacity Grants and Competitive Grants; both are annual grant programs that will be available for five (5) years, from 2023-2027.

The application for funding window opened on October 18, 2022, and closes January 17, 2023.

FCC Pilot Program Grants - ACP Outreach

In the November 2022, the FCC announced its establishment of a pilot program titled "Your Home, Your Internet." This program was created to increase awareness and encourage participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) for households receiving federal housing assistance. The program is currently set to run for 2023 only, but may be renewed. Applications for the program are due by January 9, 2023.

Comcast ProjectUP

Project UP is a comprehensive initiative to advance digital equity and focuses on connecting people to the Internet, advancing economic mobility, and opening doors for the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs, storytellers, and creators. Among the initiatives many actions, it offers grants for nonprofit community organizations that create opportunities for low-income Americans, particularly in media, arts, technology, and entrepreneurship.

https://corporate.comcast.com/impact/project-up

Project UP (comcast.com)

Digitunity

The Digital Opportunity Network is a national, independent coalition of partners focused on advancing digital equity through device ownership and shared resources. While not an actual funding source, the organization serves an invaluable purpose, providing refurbished computers to ensure that those who need one have one. They operate several programs, from technology refurbishment and advocacy, to addressing the homework gap, digital literacy, and sourcing and placing donated technology. Digitunity also works to identify and secure access to special offers for Network members, allowing devices and software to be offered more affordably.

https://digitunity.org/get-involved/give-equipment/

https://digitunity.org/get-involved/digital-opportunity-network/network-sign-up/

UPS

As part of the several special offers, UPS is partnering with Digitunity, and offering its nonprofit Network members discounts of up to 50% for working on digital literacy projects.

Save With UPS | Digital Opportunity Network | Digitunity

https://digitalopportunity.network/special-offers/

Education Superhighway

Education Superhighway is another national nonprofit organization focused on closing the K-12 classroom connectivity gap. They serve as an informational resource for the ACP, providing tutorials, outreach, and application assistance.

https://www.educationsuperhighway.org/

Digital Coach Communications Plan 2023

Summary

The digital navigator program, branded locally as the Digital Coach, builds upon the Connect Beaver County Broadband Initiative. In the pursuit of digital equity, the program will be available to all residents of Beaver County but will be specifically designed for and marketed to segments of the population who demonstrate a lack of digital literacy and/or consistent access to resources. The project plan Phase 1 will span five years, but sustainable funding opportunities have been explored and are expected to sustain the project longer.

County residents will be encouraged to schedule private sessions with trained individuals (digital coaches) for technical assistance on tasks of their choice. Sessions will take place at highly vetted and County-approved locations in areas with traditionally low internet adoption rates.

The plan will be executed, in large part, by nonprofit Tech2Elevate, with assistance and consultation from Michael Baker International.

Objectives & Goals

The purpose of this communication plan and the associated activities are to raise awareness about the Digital Coach resource. This plan will target each potential audience with specific messaging to encourage engagement, enrollment, and empowerment. Specifically, six overarching target stakeholder groups have been identified:

- Senior Citizens
- Youth with mobile-only skills
- Age 45+ job seekers
- Education seekers
- Previously incarcerated persons
- Low-income or Unhoused Individuals

Target Audiences

Senior Citizens

This audience will have varying levels of digital confidence and knowledge but may respond that they would welcome help, particularly pertaining to certain healthcare apps and tele-med appointments. Sending and receiving emails, filling out forms, mobile phone help, and printing are likely to be the most sought-after topics for training. Digital security will also make for useful information.

Outreach: Churches, church newsletters, libraries, City Hall, hospitals, doctor offices, museums, Senior Expos, grocery stores, pharmacy bag inserts, newspapers, radio, community events

Youth with Mobile-Only Skills

As in-home internet service is essential for learning and in-depth educational research and job applications, it's crucial to provide youth with mobile-only skills an understanding of how to fully utilize broadband internet. Audience may request assistance with research, creating documents, submitting work, printing and more.

Outreach: Social media (emphasis on Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok) Google Ads, Google Grants, community events, schools, school open house events

Age 45+ Job Seekers

Raised on the cusp of the technological age, many individuals were not provided sufficient digital training early on in their educational or occupational pursuits and have potentially missed out on opportunities as a result, particularly in the lower-income demographic. Resume writing and formatting, navigating job seeker search engines, and filling out online resume portals may be of interest. Additionally, adults may be simultaneously seeking help with unemployment filing and documentation.

Outreach: Community events, signs outside of township buildings, schools, libraries, library website, social media (emphasis on Facebook), churches, City Hall, public transit, grocery stores/food banks, laundromats, pharmacy bags, Google Grants

Education Seekers

Online education means greater access for those with busy work schedules or lack of transportation, but without proper computer training and access to hardware, many individuals will still miss out on educational opportunities that could help them further advance. Similarly, parents and grandparents find themselves unable to assist young children in their homes with their education needs.

Outreach: CCBC (Community College of Beaver County), Schools, libraries, churches, pediatrician offices, City Hall, community newsletters, social media (emphasis on Facebook)

Previously Incarcerated Persons

Time removed from the general population may mean a gap in the understanding of modern technologies. The audience will have varying levels of digital confidence and knowledge but could be assumed to benefit from online job-seeking skills, accessing government websites, and general internet and computer functionality.

Outreach: Parole offices, public transit, churches, community events, food banks

Low-Income or Unhoused Individuals

A poverty threshold is determined based on a family's or individual's total income. The IRS uses the federal poverty guidelines to determine eligibility for programs such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) among others. These programs may help more easily identify individuals in this audience and may provide opportunities for outreach.

Outreach: Grocery stores, food banks, pharmacy bags, churches, public transit, community events

Key Messages

The key messaging will vary based on the target audience; however, there are key messaging components that will be incorporated throughout the Digital Coach communication tactics.

Program Goals:

- To assist all residents of Beaver County who would like to advance their digital skills and confidence.
- To provide training that facilitates equal access to economic opportunities, education, and quality of life.
- To encourage low-income participants to subscribe to the ACP (Affordable Connectivity Program).

Guiding Principles:

- The Digital Coach Program is committed to patient and respectful communication and instruction with the people and communities it serves.
- The Digital Coach Program will leverage public resources for the inclusion and benefit of all Beaver County residents, equitably.

Strategy

The media strategy is designed to deliver touchpoints with various target audiences at each stage of the funnel:

- Awareness
- Engagement
- Conversion (Traffic to Beaver County Digital Coach Page for digital)

Proposed Communication Methods have been highlighted to reach target audiences. Some overlap but may benefit from slightly different messaging if budgeting and execution allow.

Proposed Communication Methods

Schedule & Deliverables

Tactic	Cost Ranges	Deliverables	Notes	Main Audiences
Digital Outreach				
Social media campaign	Utilize reach and frequency campaign geared toward generating clicks	■ Facebook (Facebook is the top reaching social platform and works in all levels) ■ Tiktok ■ IG ■ Twitter	■ Identify social media user account list willing to share posts when requested a. municipalities b. libraries c. local businesses d. food banks e. host locations f. neighborhood social pages	■ Youth ■ Job Seekers ■ Education Seekers ■ Previously Incarcerated ■ Low income
Community E-newsletters		■ Submit verbiage ■ Submit stand-alone graphic	■ Moon Township ■ Patterson Township (Announcements on website)	■ Seniors ■ Job Seekers ■ Education Seekers ■ Previously Incarcerated
Google Grants	Free - TBD	■ Up to $10,000 in ad grants. Must manage Google Ad Campaigns to maximize (or hire outside agency to do so)	■ Must apply through Google and have legitimate nonprofit standing and website.	■ Job Seekers ■ Education Seekers ■ Previously Incarcerated ■ Low income ■ Youth
In-Person Outreach				
Tabling		■ Marketing presence at community events including: ■ Santa Breakfast ■ Chili Cookoff ■ Car cruises (multiple) ■ 4th of July ■ Light Up Night ■ Fire & Ice (Dec. 10) in New Brighton (sponsorship – Tom Albany) Sponsor a fire pit?	■ Host demos?	■ All

The Reclaim Project	Free	■ Direct outreach ■ Contact: Nick Trovetta (Reach out to Lance for introduction)	■ Currently helping nine previously incarcerated individuals maintain employment and reassimilate	■ Previously Incarcerated
Partnerships	TBD	■ Geneva College ■ Beaver County Transit Authority ■ Lincoln Park Perf. Arts School ■ Range ■ Northwest ■ Community College of Beaver County	■ Details TBD with each partner	
Word of Mouth	Free	■ Suggested by several Digital Navigator hosting locations	■ Many potential host locations suggested word of mouth as an effective tool in their community	■ All
Print & Signage				
Community newsletters	Mostly Free	■ Ads or content formatted to newsletters requirements		■ All
Library newsletters	Free	■ Work directly with libraries to provide content as needed	■ Aliquippa ■ Ambridge ■ Baden ■ Beaver ■ Beaver Falls ■ CCBC ■ Center Express ■ Chippewa ■ Midland ■ Monaca ■ New Brighton ■ Rochester	
Flyers	Price out printing costs	■ Single-page flyers/ leave behinds ■ Food Bank boxes ■ SNAP program ■ Libraries ■ Grocery stores ■ Laundromats		■ All (varies depending on location)

Pharmacy bag inserts	Price out printing costs	■ Inserts	■ Walgreens ■ CVS ■ Rite Aid Pharmacy ■ The Hometown Pharmacy ■ Beaver Falls Health Mart ■ Walmart Pharmacy ■ Giant Eagle Pharmacy ■ Medicine Shoppe ■ Brighton Health Mart Pharmacy	■ Seniors
Signage in host libraries/ locations	Price out printing costs	■ Update with list of final location selections (As permitted)	■ Large, clear and visible inside each location	■ All
Yard Signs	Price out printing costs	■ Update with list of final location selections (As permitted)	■ To be displayed outside participating locations	■ All
Convenience Stores	Price out printing costs	■ Signs where permissible		■ Low-income
Paid Traditional Advertising*				
Newspaper Beaver County Times	$57 p/in B/W ROP (Frequency discounts)	■ Block Advertising/ Insert ■ Press Release ■ Event/Community calendars	■ https://localiq.com/markets/ Pennsylvania/Beaver	■ Seniors ■ Job Seekers ■ Education Seekers ■ Previously Incarcerated ■ Low income
Radio WBVP & WMBA	$37,500 100 Gross Rating Points per week (6 weeks)*	■ News Coverage ■ Radio spot	■ Adult 35-54 Target: Reach 57%, Frequency 8.9	■ Seniors ■ Job Seekers ■ Education Seekers ■ Previously Incarcerated ■ Low income
Traditional Out of Home				
Billboard	$250 - $2000 for 4-week campaign*			■ All

Pre-roll Movie Ad	$5,000 for 6 weeks (2017 costs)* Additional costs: Production Participation stipends		■ Cinemark Center Township Marketplace ■ Plaza Cinemas	■ Job Seekers ■ Education Seekers ■ Youth
Transit advertising	Free - Offered to advertise at cost	■ Internal bus ads ■ Signage at hub*	■ In cooperation with Beaver County Transit Authority ■ Interior bulkheads including media space and production. Cover ½ of the bus inventory.	■ All

Paid Traditional Advertising

Each year, we would recommend two digital and traditional media flights geared at driving adoption and promotion of the Digital Coach in order to help the program stay top-of-mind with local residents. Flyers and inserts may be affordable year-round. Further research and professional media buyer input will help inform recommendations on the exact media mix.

Media Buying Agencies

Media buying agencies specialize in assisting customers through customized media buys. While adding an additional fee on top, an experienced media buyer may help the Digital Coach advertising budget go further. They identify best time frames for advertising and assist in selecting specific markets for reaching target audiences. Agencies have extensive relationships they can leverage to provide clients with better rates and value-added incentives.

Should you want assistance with these services, Michael Baker International recommends Pittsburgh-based Hoffmann Murtaugh, a full-service integrated media planning and buying agency.

*Figures from 2021 SPC Media Buy. Media agency will assure up-to-date figures and assist in package buys.