

CCF Digital Equity Initiative: Building the Movement for Digital Equity in Los Angeles

The *Digital Equity Initiative* is a multi-year project of the California Community Foundation that will seed a digital equity movement in Los Angeles County with the power and capacity to successfully advocate for fast, reliable, and affordable broadband for all Angelenos.

The CCF Digital Equity Initiative is focused on system-change solutions to the digital divide. Los Angeles' low-income communities and communities of color have seen systemic underinvestment in the basic infrastructure that drives the internet, leaving those communities with slower, less reliable, and more expensive internet. The patterns of digital inequity mirror the patterns of real estate redlining of decades past, as well as the race- and income-based disadvantages readily apparent across sectors ranging from education to medicine and pollution burdens.

While all aspects of digital equity are critical, The CCF Digital Equity Initiative is not at present focused on digital literacy or devices. Our efforts are centered on empowering and building capacity within affected communities to fight for and win equitable access to broadband that will make literacy and devices most useful.

The Issue - Digital Equity

Access to the internet is required to fully participate in modern society; the pandemic laid to rest any debate about whether the internet is a civil right, a utility alongside electricity and water. However, many Los Angeles communities - especially low-income communities and communities of color - do not have access to fast, affordable, and reliable broadband.

Research shows that Los Angeles County's Digital Divide is rooted in:

- Widespread underinvestment in broadband infrastructure in low income communities and communities of color, resulting in limited



access to quality internet options with high speeds and reasonable costs. This pattern of disinvestment is called “digital redlining.”

- A monopoly or duopoly of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) drives a broken market for broadband services, allowing large national corporations to set the terms for quality, speed, price, and location of services. Consumers are disempowered in this broken market.
- The policymaking landscape has been monopolized by providers. Communities and local leaders have not had a seat at the legislative or regulatory tables where policy is written and resources are deployed.

Strategies for Change

The CCF Digital Equity Initiative has three three core strategies:

- Seeding an ecosystem & building a movement with power and capacity to win - expanding the network of equity champions engaging on the digital divide, and empowering them to fight for investment in broadband infrastructure in LA’s underserved communities.
- Narrative building & public education - building the narrative and case for fast, affordable, and reliable broadband as a civil right, a basic utility, and a core element of building a more equitable LA.
- Leading & mobilizing legislative and regulatory advocacy - uplifting effective collective action in support of local and state policy and regulation that spurs equitable deployment of broadband in underserved and unserved areas of LA County.

Partners

- ★ Californians for Justice Education Fund, Inc.
- ★ Committee for Greater LA Internet Action Team
- ★ Electronic Frontier Foundation
- ★ Great Public Schools Now
- ★ Institute for Local Self-Reliance
- ★ Insure the Uninsured Project
- ★ LA Digital Equity Action League
- ★ LA Voice
- ★ LA-Tech.org
- ★ LA Economic Development Corporation
- ★ National Digital Inclusion Alliance
- ★ Parent Institute for Quality Education
- ★ Shared Harvest Fund
- ★ UNITE-LA