

# Connectivity Blueprint:

## A Roadmap to Digital Equity

 RAMSEY COUNTY



SAINT PAUL  
MINNESOTA



*February 22, 2023*

# Saint Paul Digital Equity Efforts

- City CARES funding investments, collaborations between multiple city departments
  - TechPaks distribution in partnership with Ramsey County
  - Youthprise funding for Saint Paul residents on Chromebook waiting list
  - Expand wifi to reach beyond library walls
  - “Internet essentials” codes for SPPS students
- Library efforts
  - Library opens limited computer access as first in-building service
  - CARES Career labs collaboration with Ramsey County
  - Continued career labs with CDBG funding
  - Digital navigator pilot
  - Emergency connectivity funding distributions: 500 hotspots for long-term check out, added chromebooks
- Partnerships
  - MELSA digital inclusion survey
  - Connectivity Blueprint

# Connectivity Blueprint Background

- COVID-19 illuminated a digital divide and disparities in access, affordability, connectivity and navigation in electronic devices
- Digital Equity as a basic need alongside housing, food, and access to healthcare
- Launched Connectivity Blueprint following CARES funded Workforce Solutions and Saint Paul and Ramsey County Libraries collaboration
- American Rescue Plan Act funded by city of Saint Paul and County.
  - The initiative is led by Ramsey County, Saint Paul and a steering committee of experts.
  - Aimed to create a community-guided roadmap to digital equity through understanding the current policy context and community perspectives on digital equity in Ramsey County and St. Paul.

# Connectivity Blueprint Steering Committee

- Co-Chair Ling Becker, Ramsey County.
- Co-Chair Drew Nelson Saint Paul.
- Rebecca Ryan, Saint Paul.
- Jon Grebner, Mayor's Office.
- Bruce Riebe, Saint Paul.
- Council Member Nelsie Yang, Saint Paul.
- John Perlich, Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Idrissa Davis, Saint Paul.
- Chetan Ganatra, Ramsey County.
- Mary Sue Hansen, Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative.
- Pamela Maldonado, Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties.
- Commissioner Trista Matascastillo, Ramsey County.
- Tiffany Kong, Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation.
- Dr. Ellen Roster, Saint Paul College.
- Josh Anderson, Maplewood – North Saint Paul School District.
- Megan Jekot, Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood.

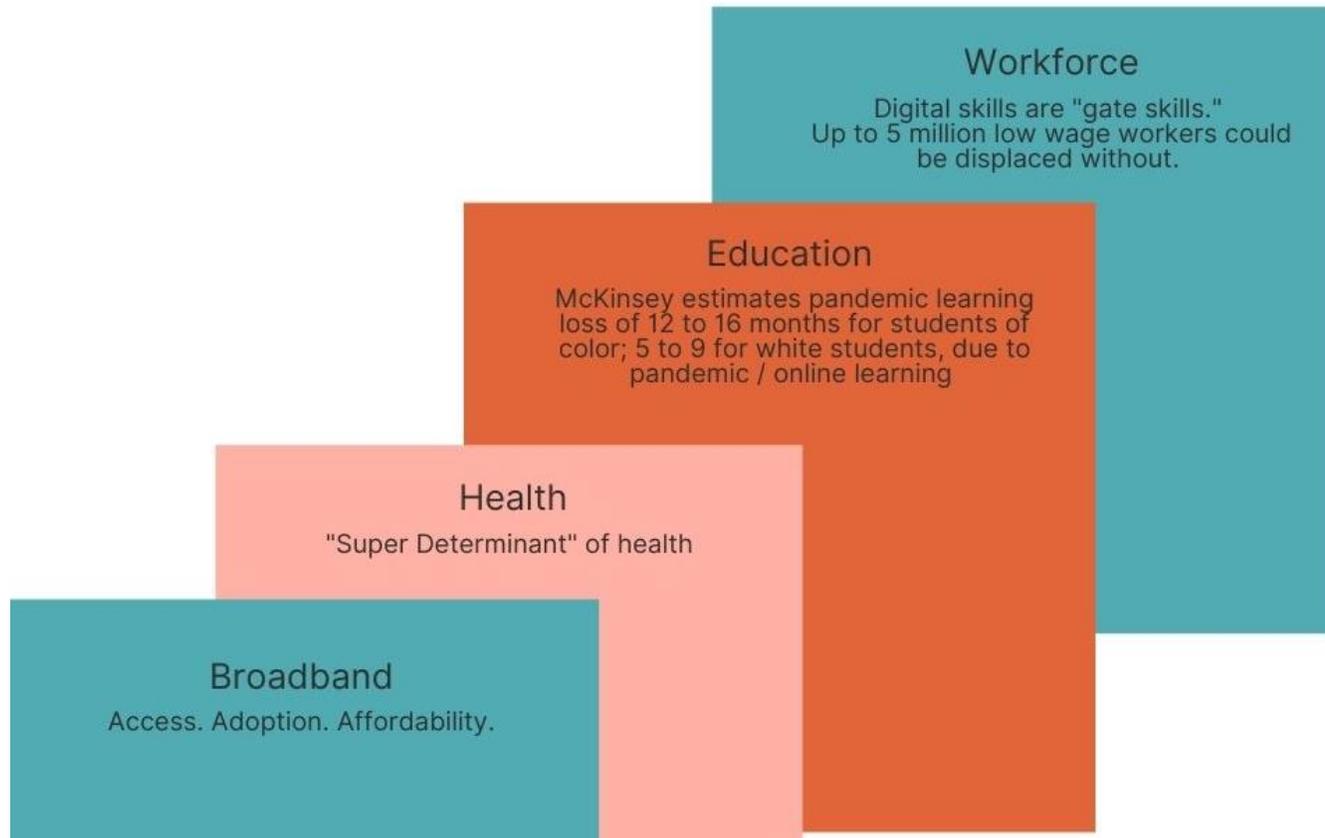
# Our Process



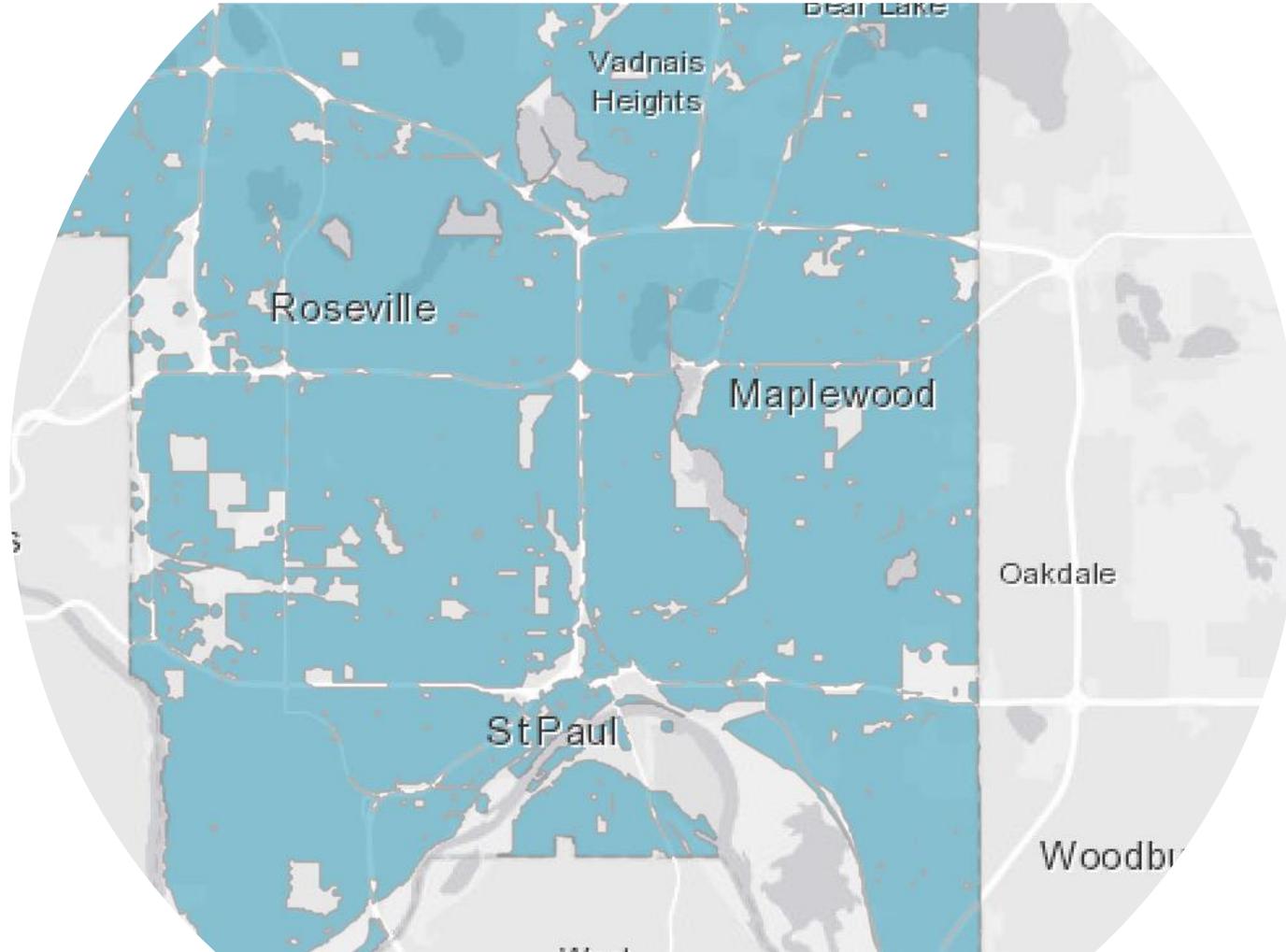
# Digital Equity Definitions

- **Equity:** Equity is about fairness. It's about rebalancing social systems.
- **Full Connectivity:** Having sufficient devices and connections to fully participate in online life. This includes a broadband connection with sufficient upload / download speeds, a computer or tablet, a cell phone and a cell plan.

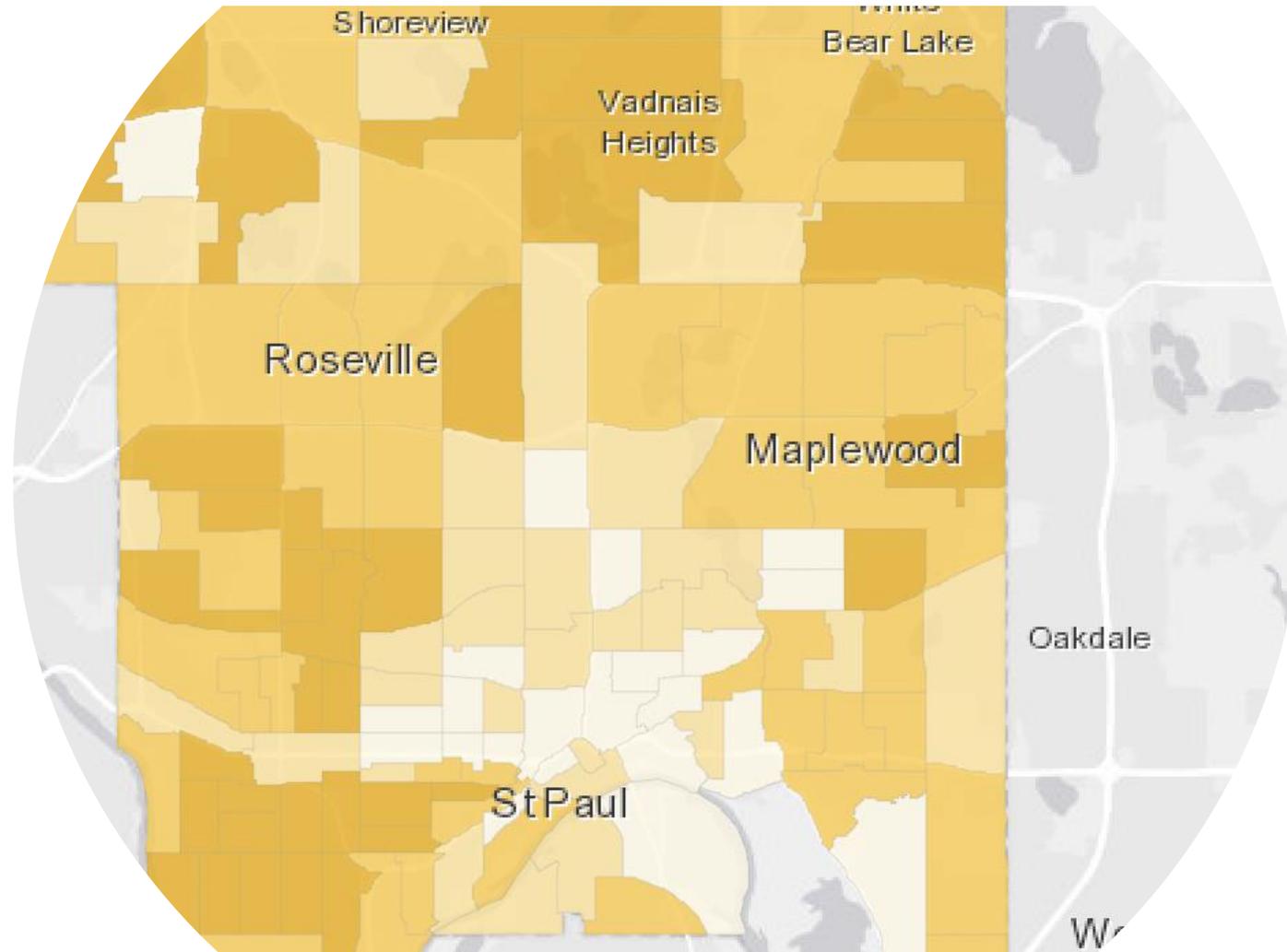
# Digital Inclusion is the Foundation of an Equitable Future



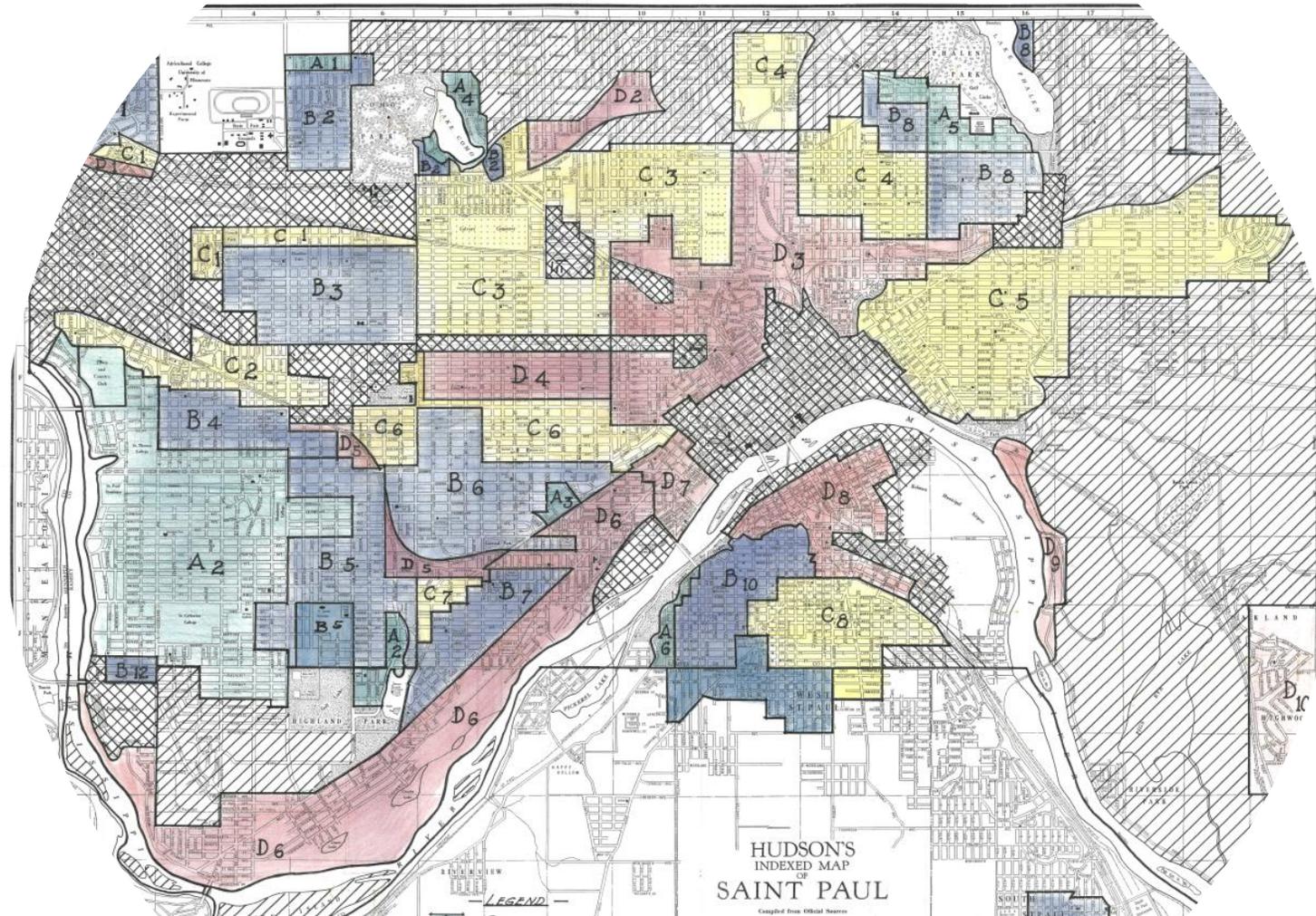
# Digital Inequities are Driven by Systemic Inequities with Deep Roots



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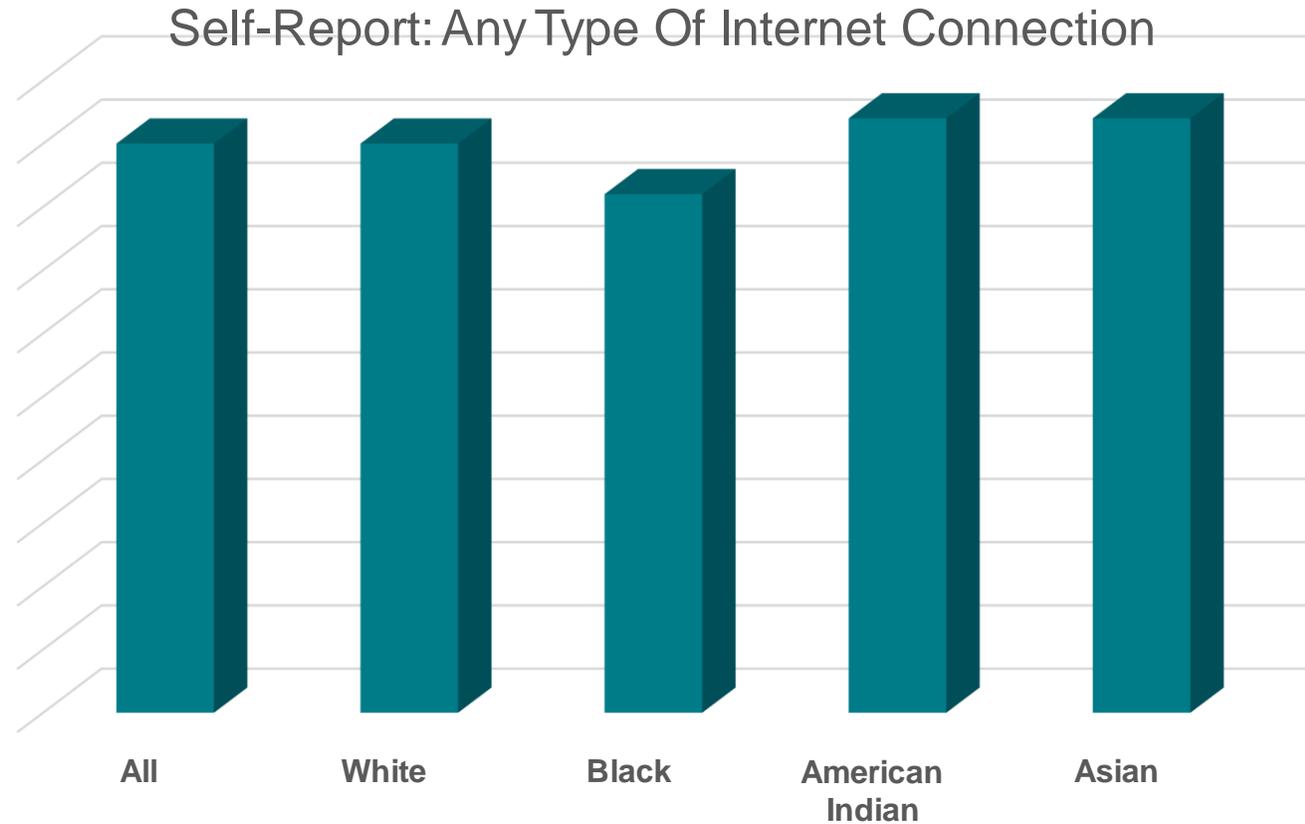




**Digital Inclusion Focus:**  
It's About People, Not Wires

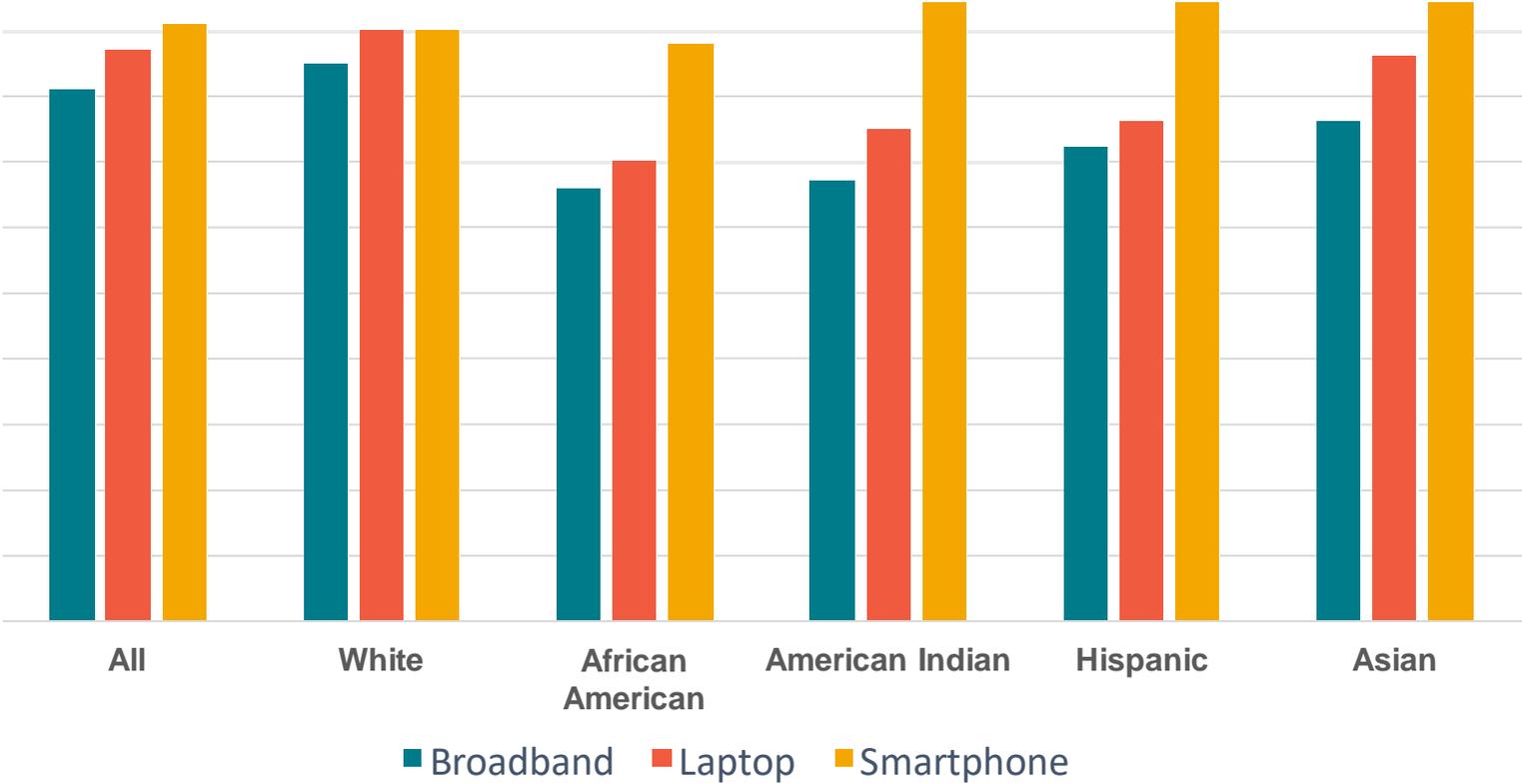
Connectivity  
Blueprint

# Most Ramsey County Residents Have Some Internet Connection



# But Broadband, Device Divides are Substantial

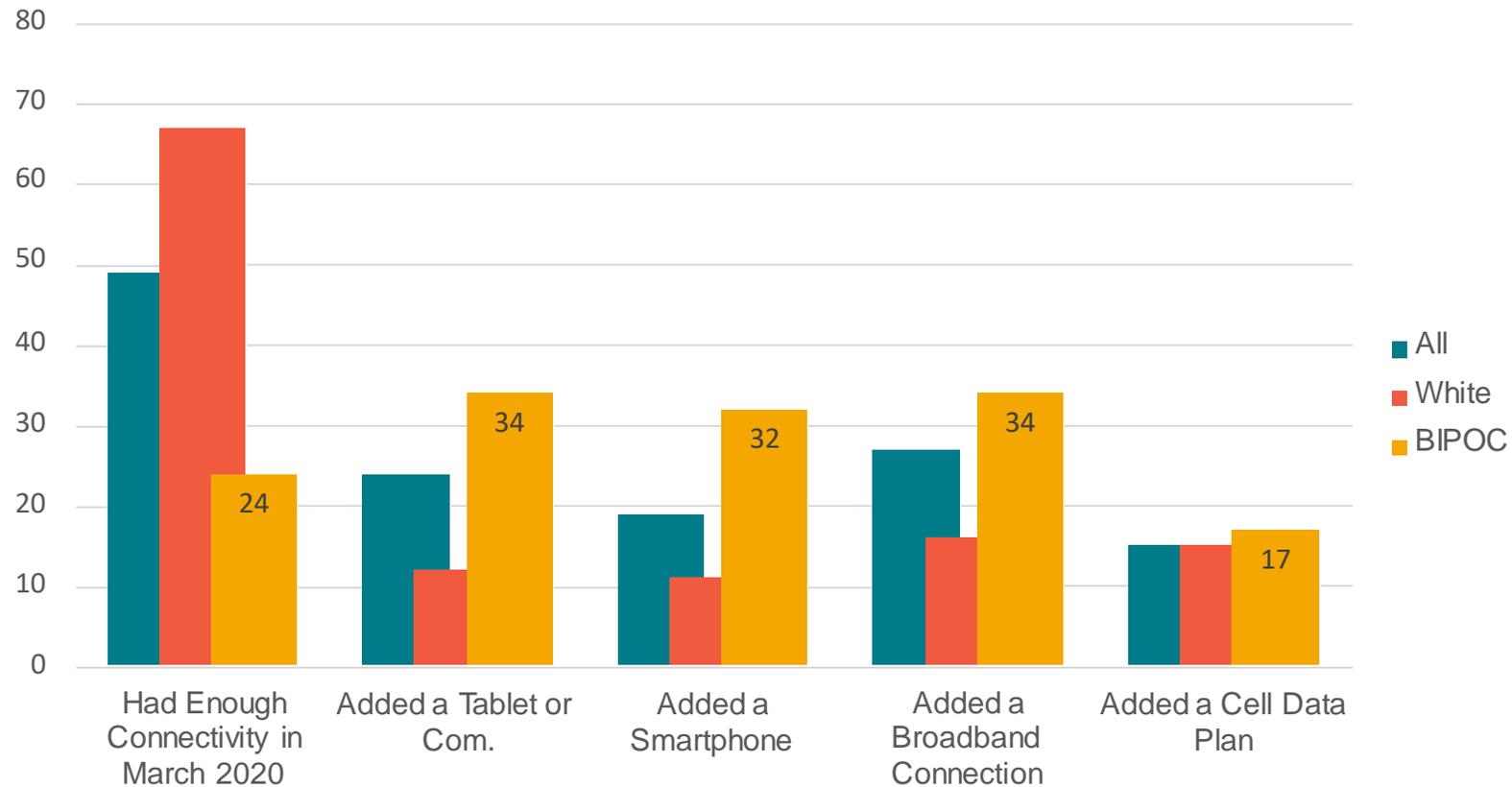
Broadband, Laptop and Smartphone Access by Race



Source: American Community Survey

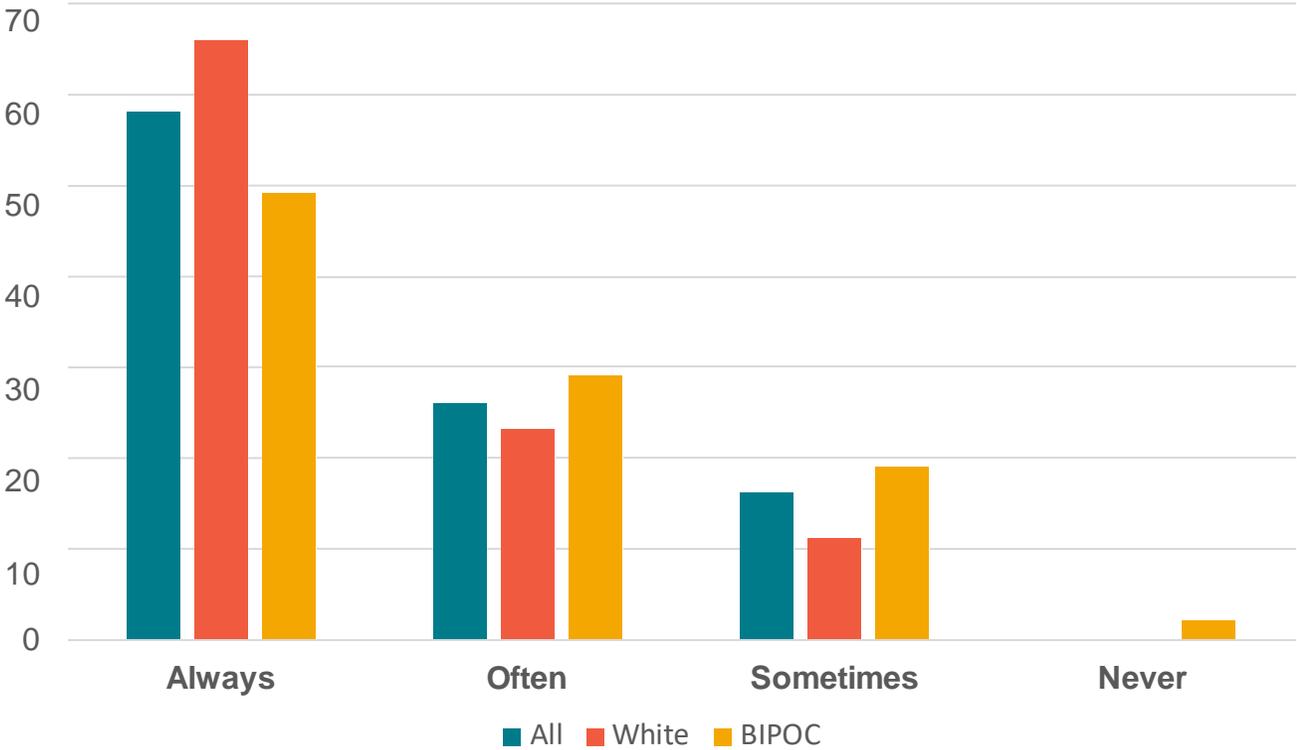
# Ramsey/Saint Paul BIPOC Communities Started the Pandemic Behind

Describe Your Connectivity in March 2020

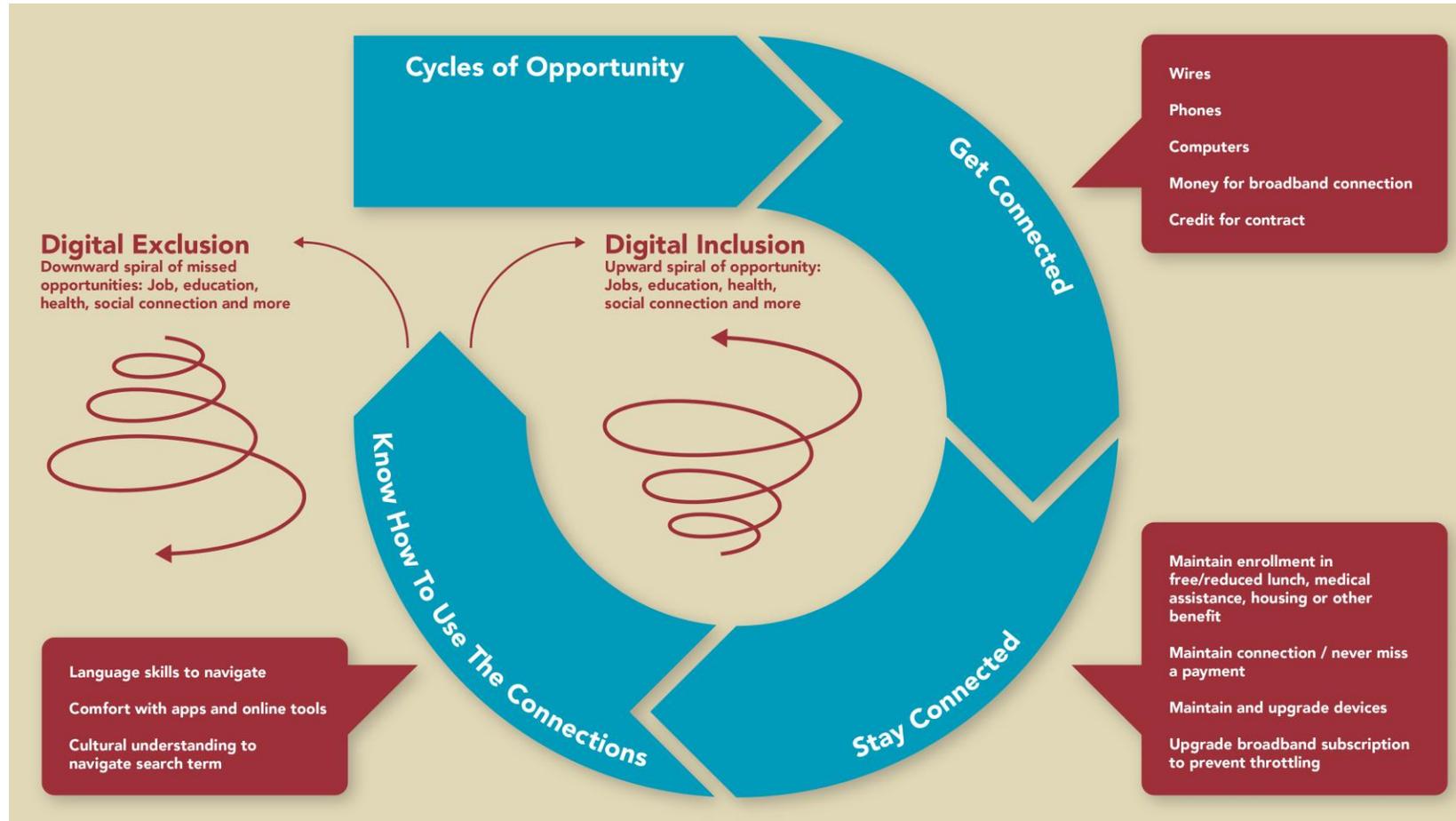


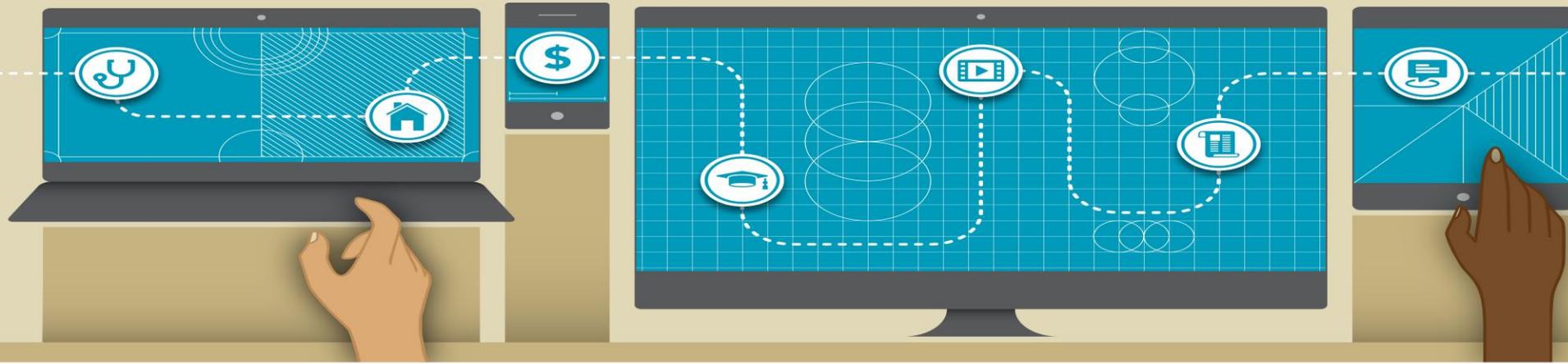
# The Digital Divide in Ramsey/Saint Paul is Felt Today

How often do you have the technology and internet access needed to participate in online life as much as you would like to?



# Rethinking the “Three-Legged Stool”





## Recommendation Areas

- Build awareness of digital equity as an equity, not infrastructure, issue.
- Take immediate actions to strengthen and grow programs.
- Collaborate to maximize federal funding for digital equity in Ramsey/Saint Paul.
- Advance broadband policy that makes connectivity accessible to all.

# Conclusions

- Digital equity is the foundation of an equitable future.
- Focus on **people**, our residents and their families, not only on wires and broadband
- The city has an opportunity to invest in digital infrastructure in a way that prioritizes digital equity through federal funding coming to the state over the next 2-5 years.
- Opportunity for multiple city departments to work in partnership, continued opportunities for metro area collaboration
- Embed digital equity in our strategic priorities work.
- Align our legislative efforts and policies as the state forms its plans.
- Final report live on county website in next few weeks