**Digital Connection Committee (DCC)**

Age Friendly Olmsted County (AFOC) formed a DCC in March 2023 comprised of contributing stakeholders. Family Service Rochester as the AFOC lead agency then applied for and was awarded a grant from the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development Office of Broadband Development (OBD) to support our participation in a statewide digital inclusion information project. The project was conducted during April through June 2023.

We submitted as required by the grant a quantitative survey, an asset inventory, and three 1-1 interviews along with other materials.

Our stakeholder contributors included:

- 125 Live
- Age Friendly Oronoco
- Elder Network
- Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association
- Rochester Public Library

No report or recommendations were required. Included in this file is the data submitted to OBD in completion of the grant.

# DIGITAL CONNECTION COMMITTEES

## WHAT ARE DIGITAL CONNECTION COMMITTEES?

Under the federal Digital Equity Act, Office of Broadband Development (OBD) is developing a statewide plan to strategize improvements in internet affordability, access to internet-enabled devices, and access to digital skills training. Digital Connection Committees serve as key partners in ensuring the plan reflects the goals and needs of all Minnesotans.

Digital Connection Committees are self-selected, voluntary workgroups that can be formed by a wide variety of entities, including but not limited to political subdivisions, tribes, non-profits, anchor institutions, faith-based organizations, Minnesota-based businesses, and more – or any combination of these. Digital Connection Committees representing one or more of the following populations are especially encouraged to participate:

- People age 60 or older
- People who are incarcerated
- Veterans
- People with disabilities

- People from low-income households
- People learning to speak or read English
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
- People living in rural communities

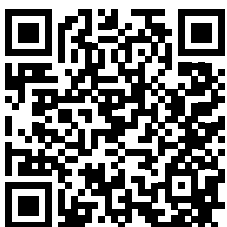## WHAT ARE DIGITAL CONNECTION COMMITTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES?

The workload is deliberately flexible. Digital Connection Committees have two **required** responsibilities: (1) receive and share updates about OBD's digital equity planning process and (2) allow OBD to list your Committee on our website.

Committees have several **optional** responsibilities: (1) gather local information about digital inclusion assets, needs, and goals to shape the Digital Equity Plan from April 3 to June 30; (2) attend virtual networking sessions to learn from other Committees; (3) provide feedback on a draft of the Digital Equity Plan between August 21 and September 29; and (4) be a network of partners for OBD to rely on as Digital Equity Act work progresses beyond 2023. No Committee is too small to participate.

## WHAT IS THE TIMELINE?

| DATE | ACTIVITY |
|------|----------|
| April 3 | OBD begins supporting Committees in gathering information about digital inclusion assets and needs. |
| April 12 | Virtual networking hour for all Digital Connection Committees. Details forthcoming. |
| June 14 | Virtual networking hour for all Digital Connection Committees. Details forthcoming. |
| June 30 | Digital inclusion information due to OBD. Further instructions will be provided. |
| August 21 | Draft plan posted online for public comment. OBD begins in-person regional gatherings. |
| September 29 | Last day for public comment. OBD concludes in-person regional gatherings. |
| November 30 | Final plan submitted to federal government for review. |

While Digital Connection Committees may choose to disband after November 30, additional opportunities to carry out activities from the plan will be available in 2024.

## HOW DO I REGISTER OR JOIN A CONNECTION COMMITTEE?

Visit OBD's Digital Inclusion website and submit the Digital Connection Committee registration form. Committees registering by April 7 will be able to participate fully in gathering information.

**mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/adoption**

Contact: Hannah Buckland, Digital Equity Program Lead
hannah.buckland@state.mn.us or 651-259-7267

# Q1 Do you have non-mobile internet access in your home? Non-mobile means your internet access doesn't depend on a cell phone data plan or a mobile hotspot.
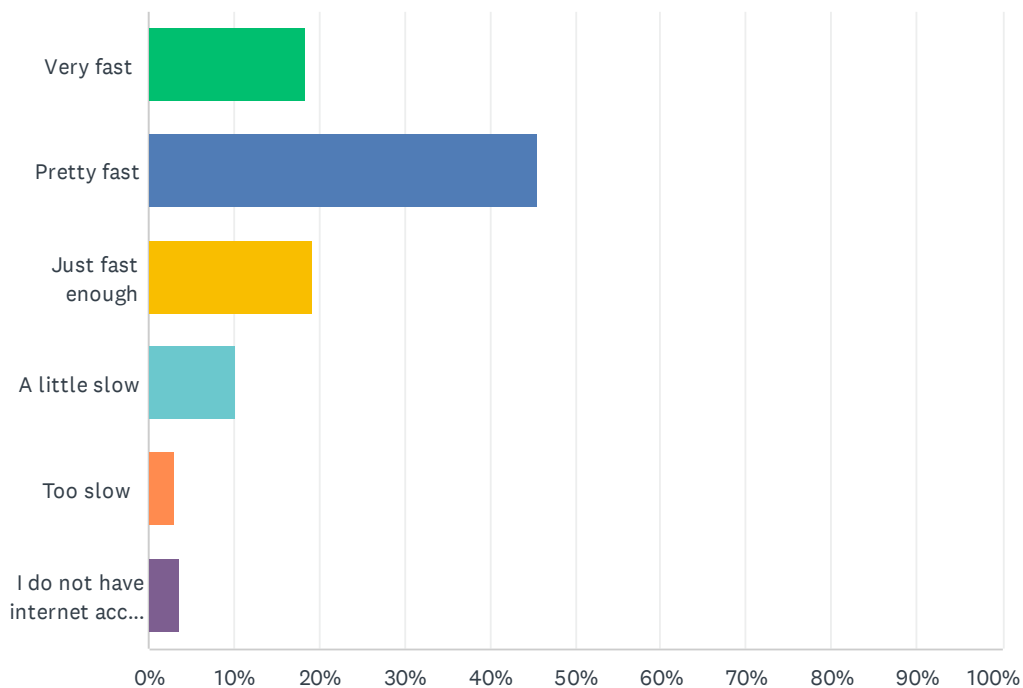
Answered: 136     Skipped: 0
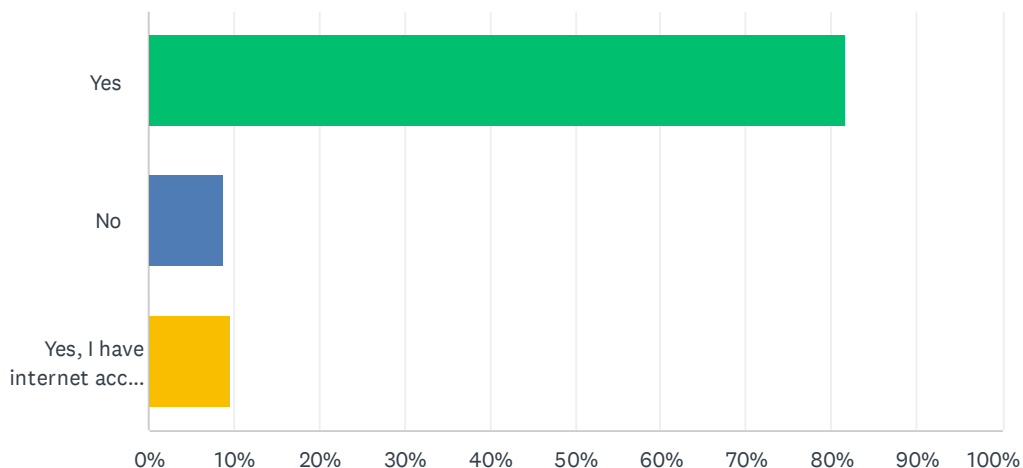


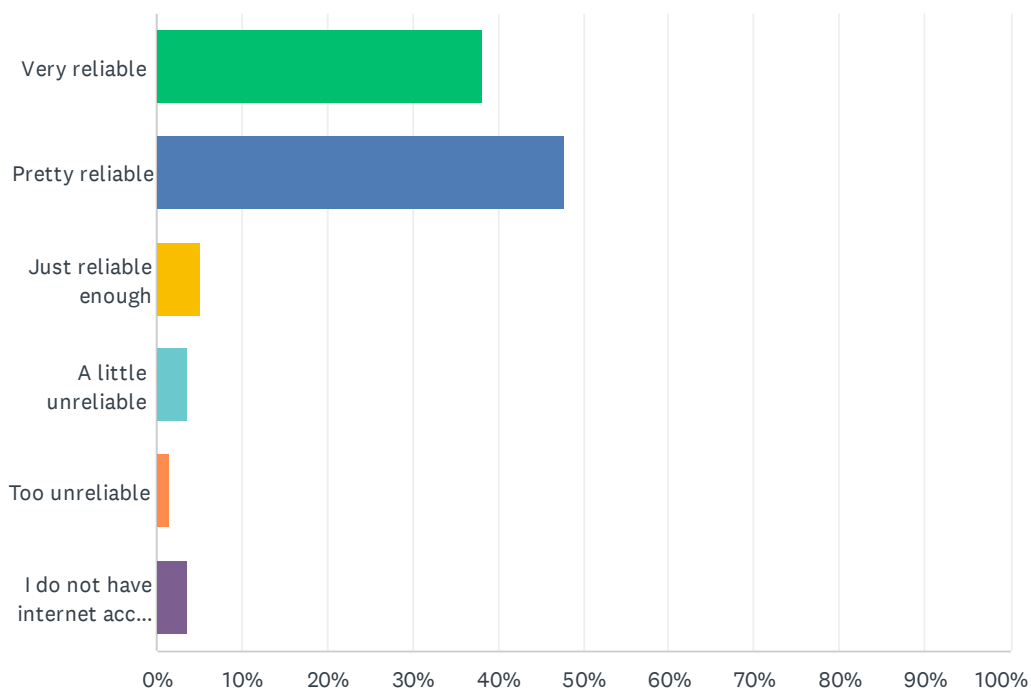| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 81.62% | 111 |
| No | 8.82% | 12 |
| Yes, I have internet access in my home, but I don't know if it's non-mobile | 9.56% | 13 |
| TOTAL | | 136 |

# Q2  How fast is your internet access at home?

Answered: 136     Skipped: 0



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Very fast | 18.38% | 25 |
| Pretty fast | 45.59% | 62 |
| Just fast enough | 19.12% | 26 |
| A little slow | 10.29% | 14 |
| Too slow | 2.94% | 4 |
| I do not have internet access at home | 3.68% | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 136 |

# Q3 How reliable is your internet access at home?

Answered: 136     Skipped: 0



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Very reliable | 38.24% | 52 |
| Pretty reliable | 47.79% | 65 |
| Just reliable enough | 5.15% | 7 |
| A little unreliable | 3.68% | 5 |
| Too unreliable | 1.47% | 2 |
| I do not have internet access at home | 3.68% | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 136 |

## Q4 If you don't have internet access at home or if your home internet connection is unavailable, do you go to any of the following places to use the internet instead? Check all that apply.

Answered: 38    Skipped: 98
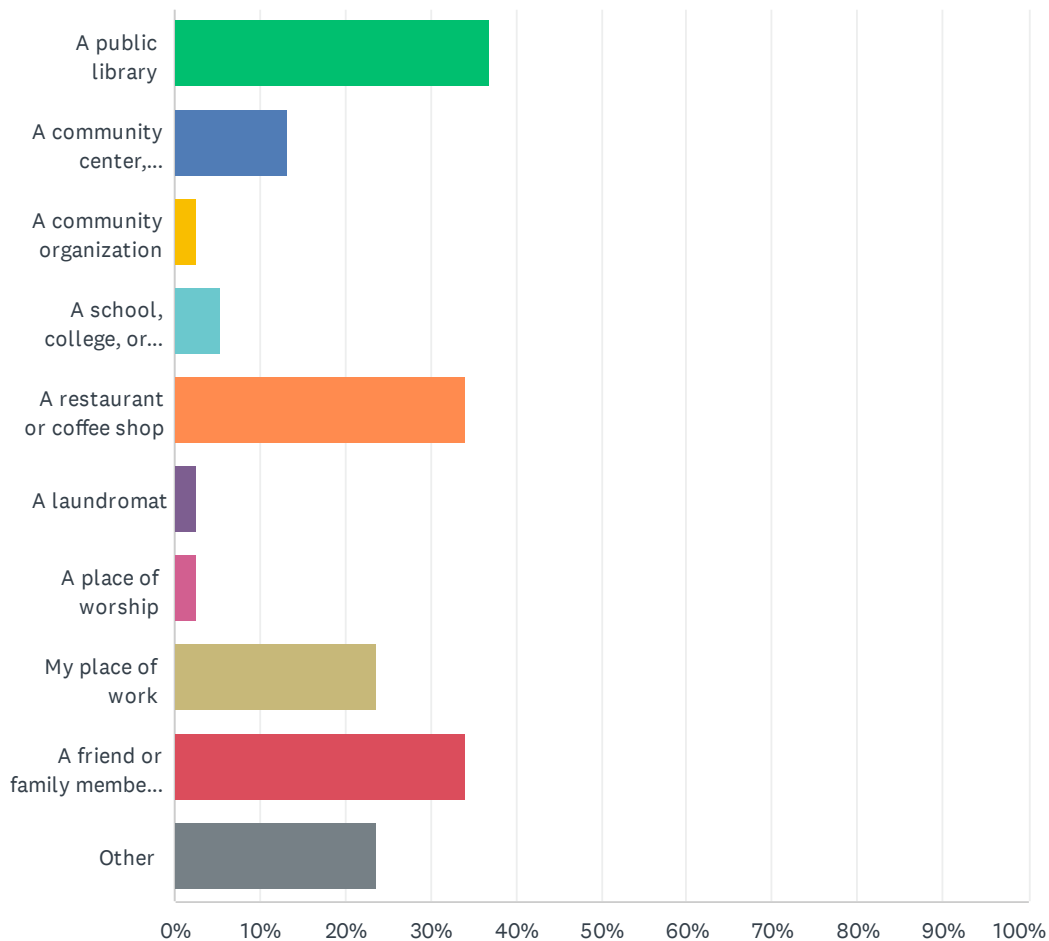
# Digital Connection Survey

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| A public library | 36.84% | 14 |
| A community center, community gym, or recreation center | 13.16% | 5 |
| A community organization | 2.63% | 1 |
| A school, college, or university | 5.26% | 2 |
| A restaurant or coffee shop | 34.21% | 13 |
| A laundromat | 2.63% | 1 |
| A place of worship | 2.63% | 1 |
| My place of work | 23.68% | 9 |
| A friend or family member's house | 34.21% | 13 |
| Other | 23.68% | 9 |
| Total Respondents: 38 | | |

# Q5 What tech devices do you regularly have access to at home? Check all that apply.

Answered: 135     Skipped: 1
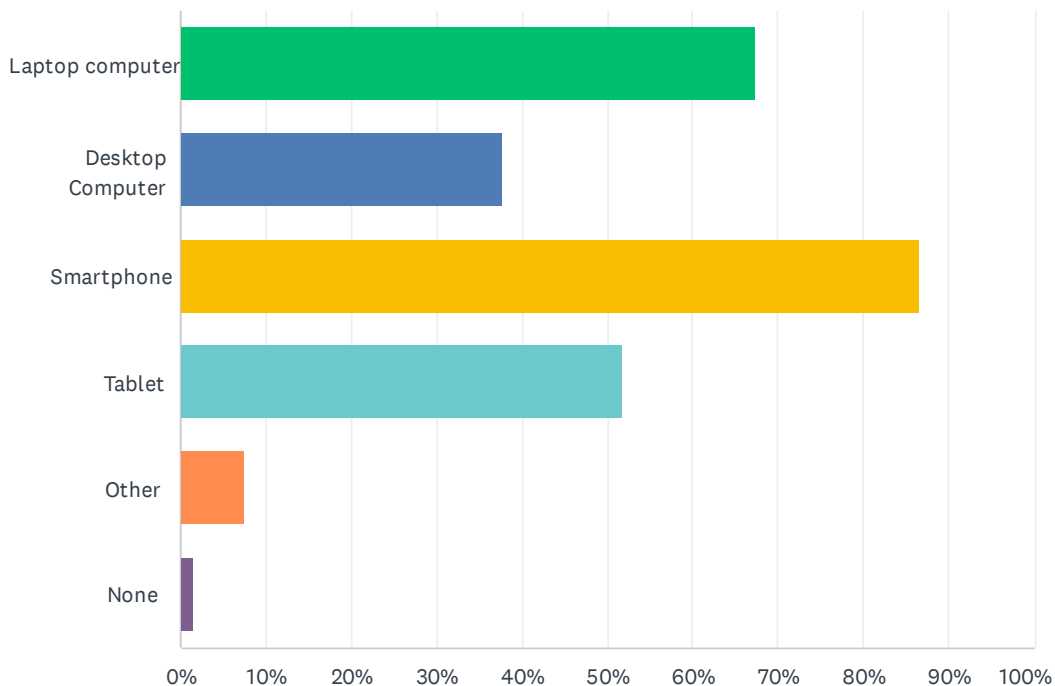
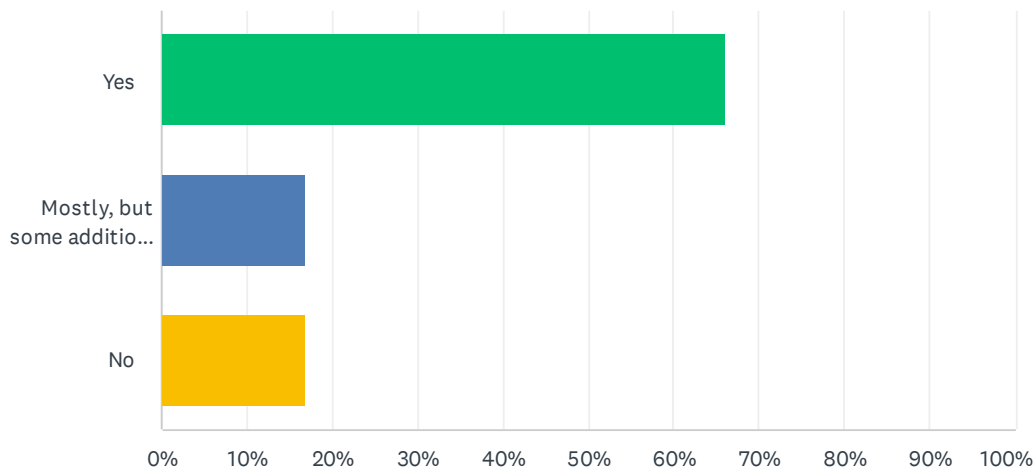

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Laptop computer | 67.41% | 91 |
| Desktop Computer | 37.78% | 51 |
| Smartphone | 86.67% | 117 |
| Tablet | 51.85% | 70 |
| Other | 7.41% | 10 |
| None | 1.48% | 2 |
| Total Respondents: 135 | | |

# Q6 Does your most frequently used tech device at home have all of the applications and software (such as Microsoft Word) that you need?
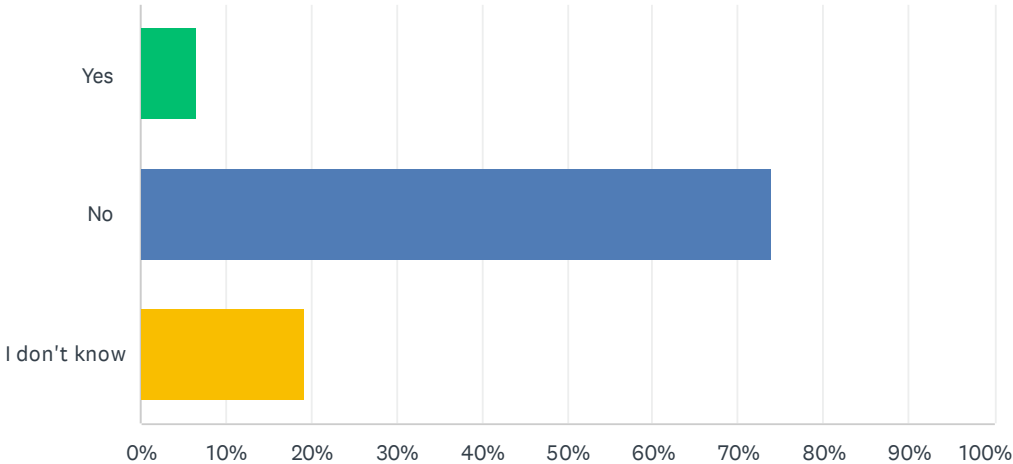
Answered: 130    Skipped: 6



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 66.15% | 86 |
| Mostly, but some additional software would be helpful | 16.92% | 22 |
| No | 16.92% | 22 |
| TOTAL | | 130 |

# Q7 Do you use any assistive technologies?

Answered: 135    Skipped: 1



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 6.67% | 9 |
| No | 74.07% | 100 |
| I don't know | 19.26% | 26 |
| TOTAL | | 135 |

# Q8 Are there any assistive technologies you need but currently do not have access to?

Answered: 133    Skipped: 3
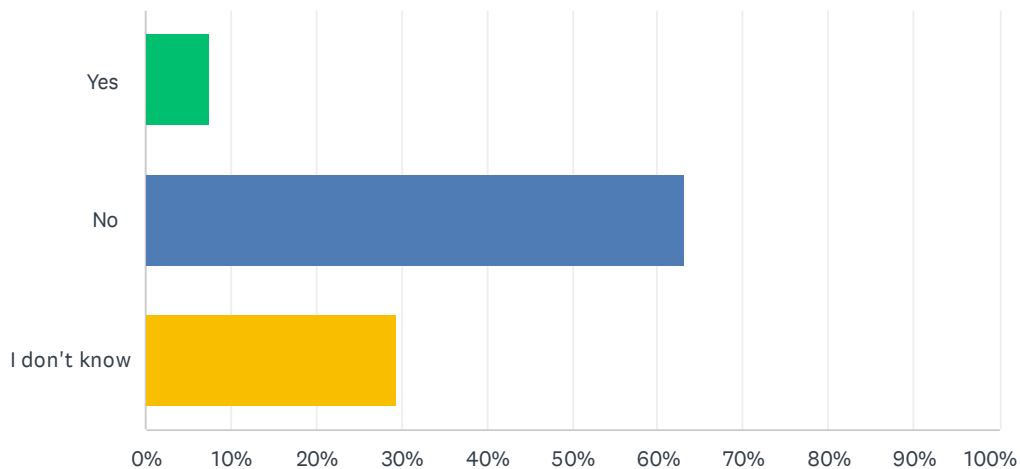


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 7.52% | 10 |
| No | 63.16% | 84 |
| I don't know | 29.32% | 39 |
| TOTAL | | 133 |

## Q9 In a typical week, how many days do you spend at least 30 minutes using the internet?

Answered: 134     Skipped: 2
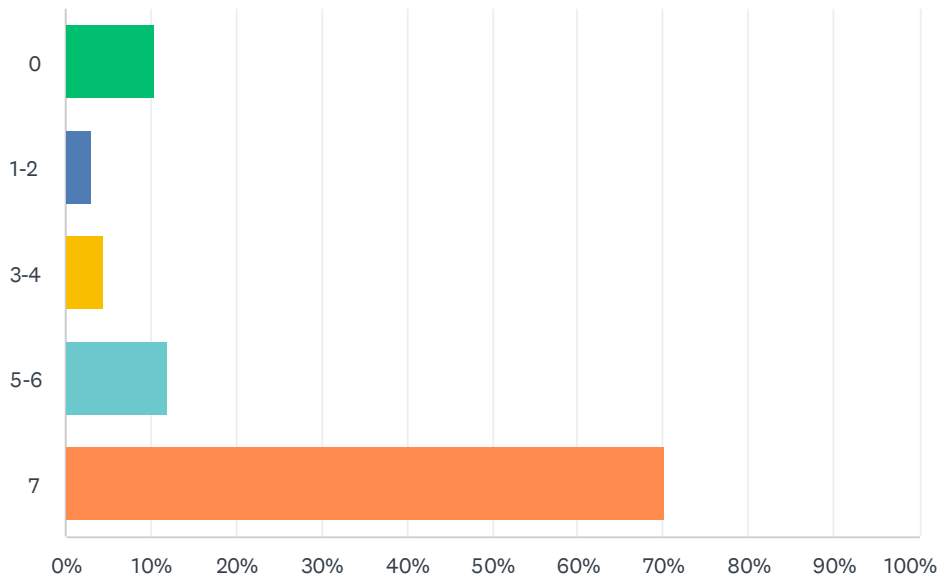


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 10.45% | 14 |
| 1-2 | 2.99% | 4 |
| 3-4 | 4.48% | 6 |
| 5-6 | 11.94% | 16 |
| 7 | 70.15% | 94 |
| TOTAL | | 134 |

# Q10 In the past six months, have you used the internet for any of the following activities? Check all that apply.

Answered: 134     Skipped: 2
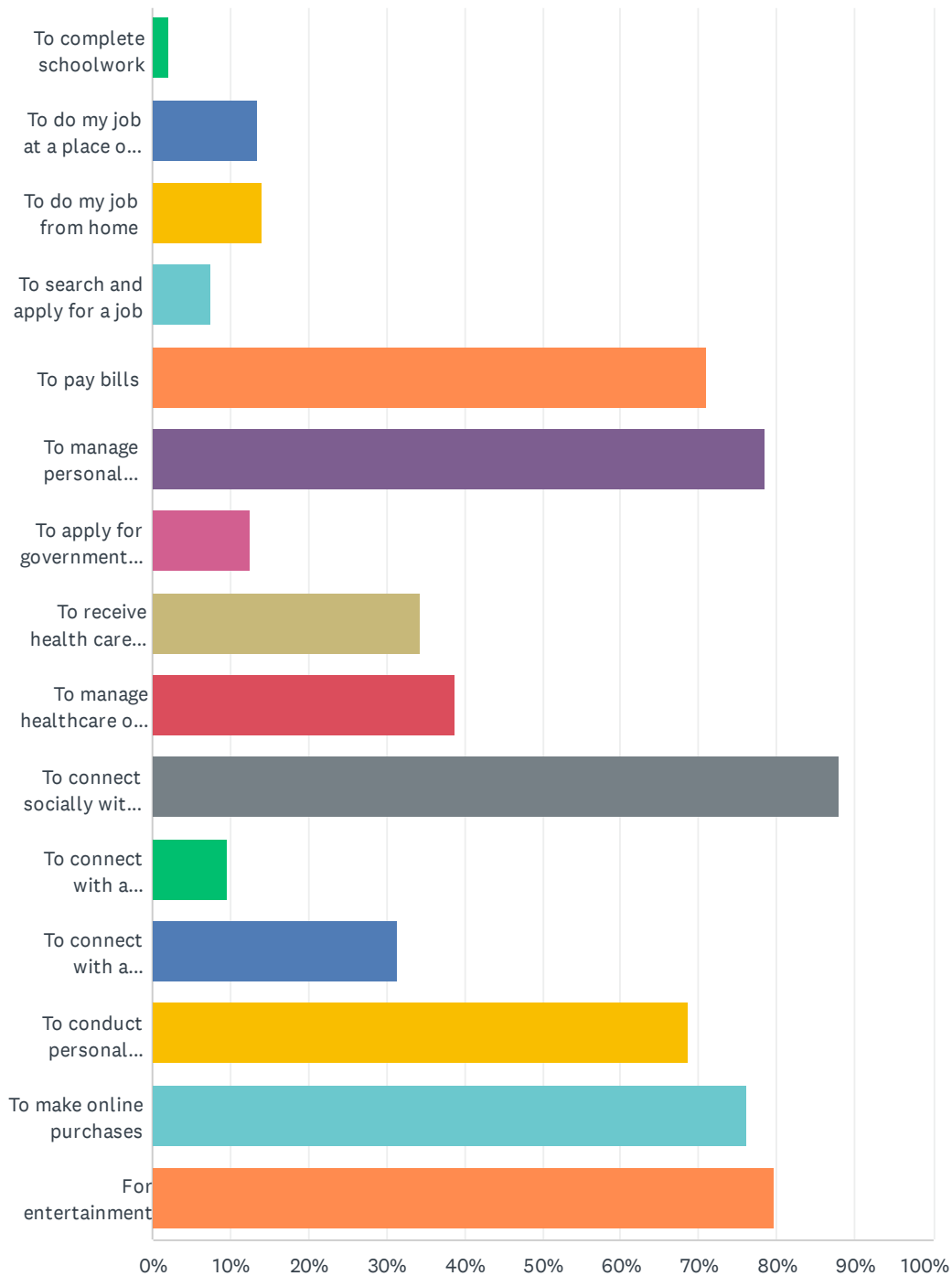
# Digital Connection Survey

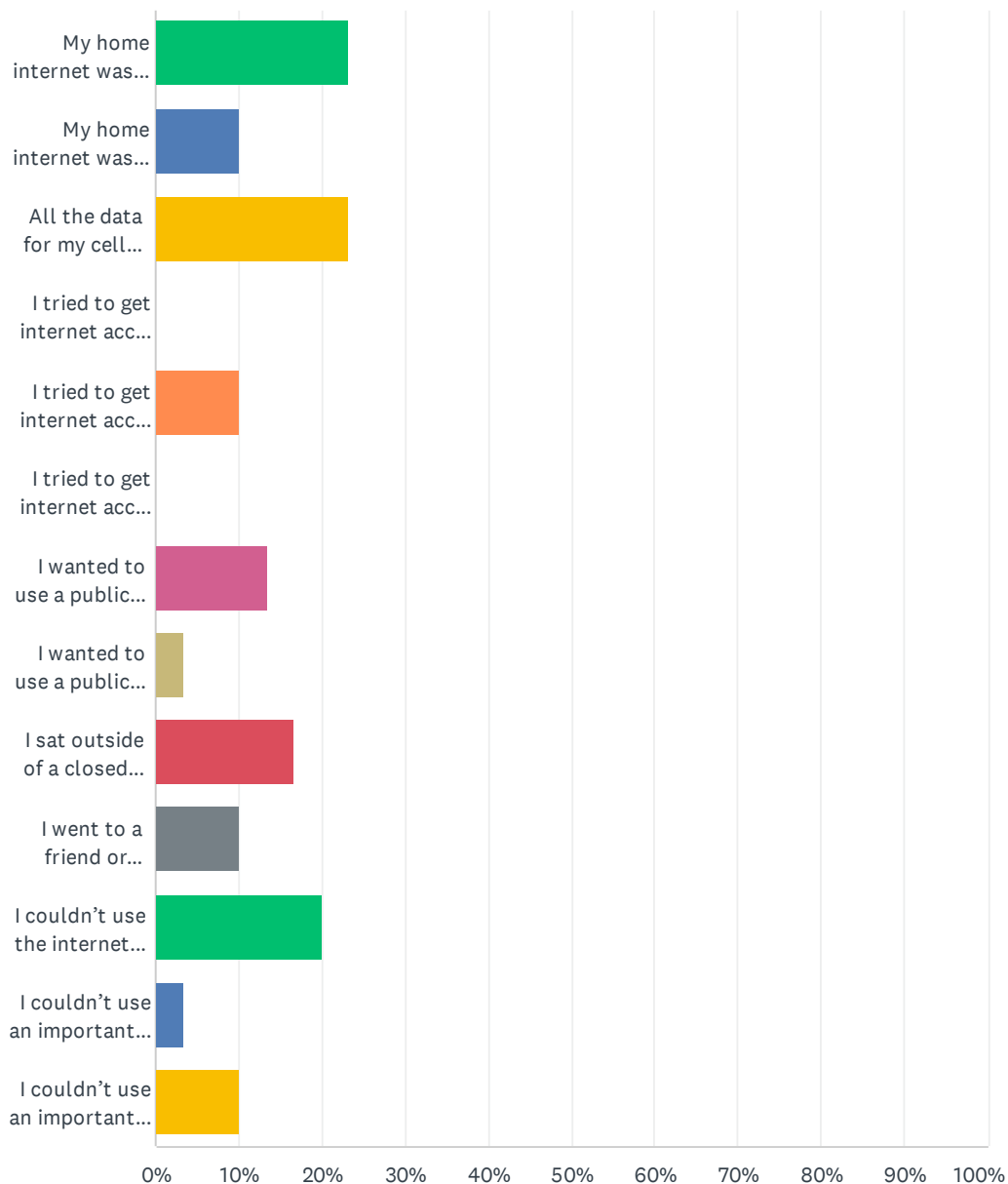| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| To complete schoolwork | 2.24% | 3 |
| To do my job at a place of work outside my home | 13.43% | 18 |
| To do my job from home | 14.18% | 19 |
| To search and apply for a job | 7.46% | 10 |
| To pay bills | 70.90% | 95 |
| To manage personal finances (example: online banking) | 78.36% | 105 |
| To apply for government programs | 12.69% | 17 |
| To receive health care (example: telehealth) | 34.33% | 46 |
| To manage healthcare of a family member (example: refill a prescription) | 38.81% | 52 |
| To connect socially with friends and family | 88.06% | 118 |
| To connect with a therapeutic of support group | 9.70% | 13 |
| To connect with a faith-based group | 31.34% | 42 |
| To conduct personal research | 68.66% | 92 |
| To make online purchases | 76.12% | 102 |
| For entertainment | 79.85% | 107 |
| Total Respondents: 134 | | |

## Q11  In the past six months, have you experienced any of the following situations related to internet access? Check all that apply.

Answered: 30      Skipped: 106

# Digital Connection Survey

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| My home internet was disconnected for five days or more due to a technical problem, bad weather, etc. | 23.33% | 7 |
| My home internet was disconnected for five days or more due to late payments | 10.00% | 3 |
| All the data for my cell phone or hotspot got used up | 23.33% | 7 |
| I tried to get internet access at home but was denied by the internet provider | 0.00% | 0 |
| I tried to get internet access at home but the process was overwhelming | 10.00% | 3 |
| I tried to get internet access at home and didn't know who to ask for help | 0.00% | 0 |
| I wanted to use a public internet connection, such as at a library, but didn't have transportation | 13.33% | 4 |
| I wanted to use a public internet connection, such as at a library, but didn't have time to during the location's open hours | 3.33% | 1 |
| I sat outside of a closed building and used their public internet from a personal device | 16.67% | 5 |
| I went to a friend or family member's house specifically to use their internet connection | 10.00% | 3 |
| I couldn't use the internet to do what I needed to do because my home connection is slow | 20.00% | 6 |
| I couldn't use an important website because it wasn't written in a language I read fluently | 3.33% | 1 |
| I couldn't use an important website because it wasn't accessibility for people with disabilities | 10.00% | 3 |
| Total Respondents: 30 | | |

# Q12 In the past six months, have you experienced any of the following situations related to tech devices? Check all that apply.

Answered: 27    Skipped: 109
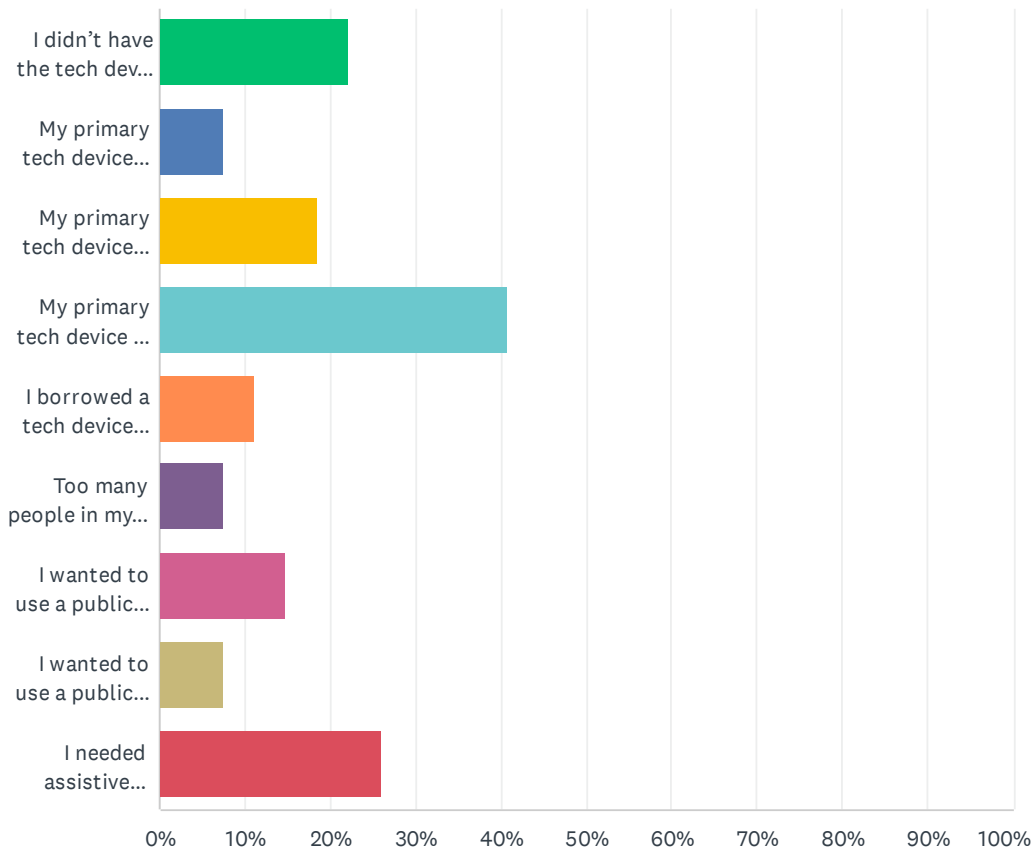


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| I didn't have the tech device that I really needed. For example, I used a smartphone to do homework or used a laptop from my parked car | 22.22% | 6 |
| My primary tech device broke and I didn't know who to ask for help | 7.41% | 2 |
| My primary tech device broke and I couldn't afford to replace or fix it | 18.52% | 5 |
| My primary tech device was being so slow that I just gave up trying to use it | 40.74% | 11 |
| I borrowed a tech device from a family member or friend because I didn't have one that worked | 11.11% | 3 |
| Too many people in my house were trying to share too few tech devices | 7.41% | 2 |
| I wanted to use a public computer but didn't have transportation | 14.81% | 4 |
| I wanted to use a public computer but didn't have time during the location's open hours | 7.41% | 2 |
| I needed assistive technology but didn't have access to it | 25.93% | 7 |
| Total Respondents: 27 | | |

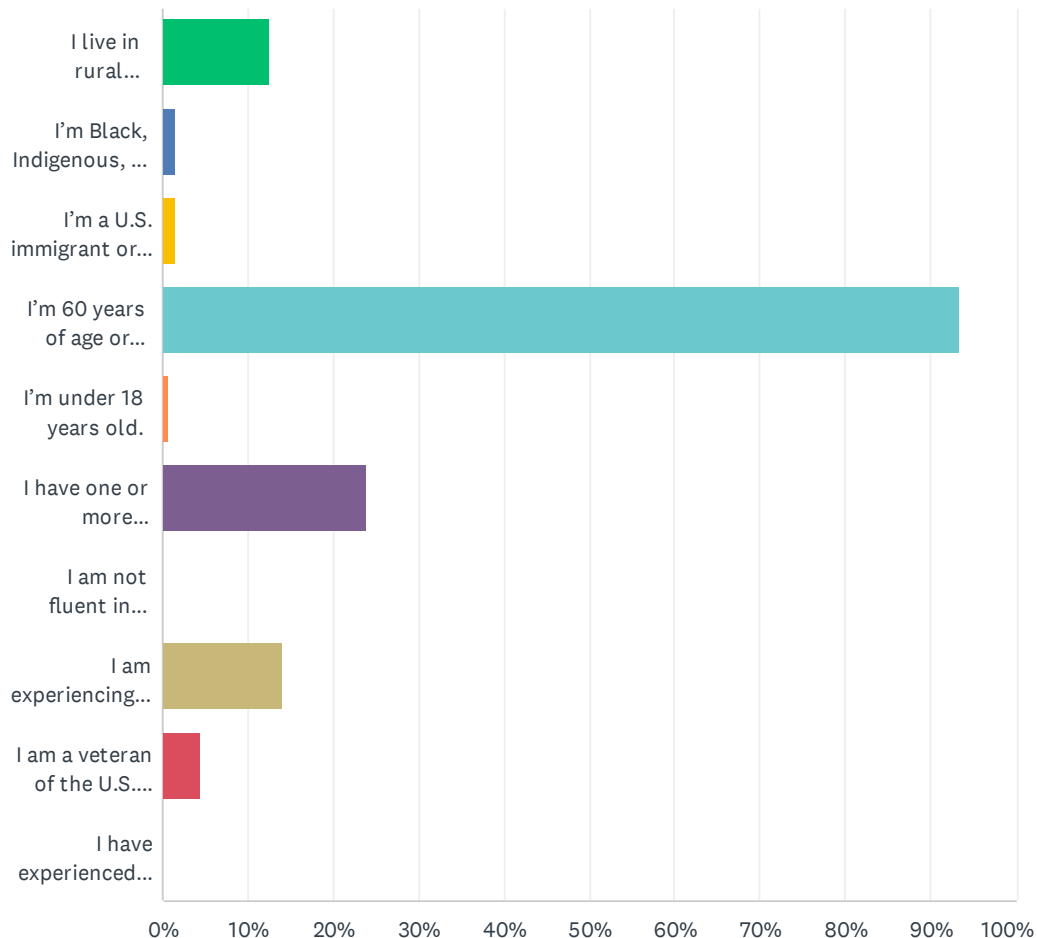## Q13 In which Minnesota County or Native Nation do you reside?

Answered: 134   Skipped: 2

## Q14 Including yourself, how many people of any age live in your household?

Answered: 134     Skipped: 2

# Q15 Do you relate to any of the following identities or experiences? Check all that apply:

Answered: 134    Skipped: 2

# Digital Connection Survey

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| I live in rural Minnesota. | 12.69% | 17 |
| I'm Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color. | 1.49% | 2 |
| I'm a U.S. immigrant or refugee. | 1.49% | 2 |
| I'm 60 years of age or older. | 93.28% | 125 |
| I'm under 18 years old. | 0.75% | 1 |
| I have one or more disabilities. | 23.88% | 32 |
| I am not fluent in spoken English. | 0.00% | 0 |
| I am experiencing poverty. | 14.18% | 19 |
| I am a veteran of the U.S. military or a veteran from a military outside the U.S. | 4.48% | 6 |
| I have experienced incarceration within the last two years. | 0.00% | 0 |
| Total Respondents: 134 | | |

# Q16 What is your employment status?

Answered: 136    Skipped: 0
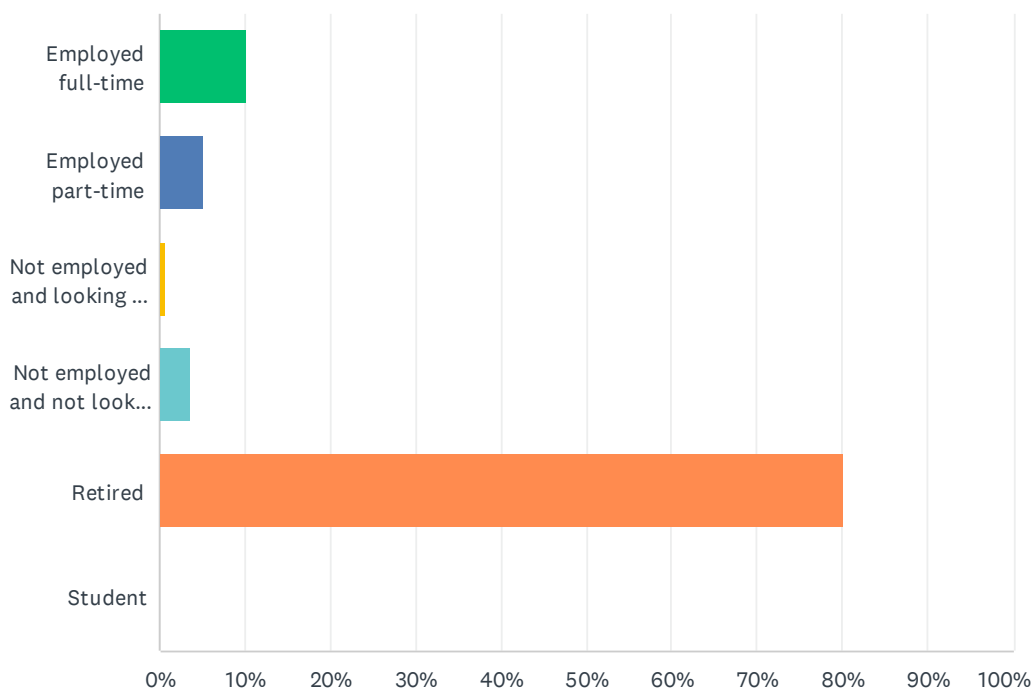


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Employed full-time | 10.29% | 14 |
| Employed part-time | 5.15% | 7 |
| Not employed and looking for work | 0.74% | 1 |
| Not employed and not looking for work | 3.68% | 5 |
| Retired | 80.15% | 109 |
| Student | 0.00% | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 136 |

# Digital Connection Committees: Asset Inventory Coversheet

NOTE: By default, you can only edit the two empty white cells on this page. Please contact Hannah Buckland if you

1. Use the space below to define the geographic area your DCC represents or aims to learn more about.

Olmsted County

2. Use the space below to describe the people whose digital inclusion needs your DCC represents or aims to learn more about. What age range are they? Do they belong to a specific racial or ethnic group? What languages

People who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color
People ages 60 years or older\
People under age 18
People living outside of the 7-county Metro area
People with disabilities
People who are not fluent in spoken English
People who have limited English literacy

3. Navigate to the "Assets" tab below to complete the inventory.

# Digital Connection Committees: Asset Inventory List
NOTE: By default, you can only edit the empty white cells on this page.

| Organization | Physical Location | Website |
| --- | --- | --- |
| EXAMPLE: Crossroads Public Library | Crossroads, MN | not available |
| EXAMPLE: Comcast | serves about half of our county | https://www.xfinity.com/learn/internet-service/internet-essentials |
| EXAMPLE: Crossroads Senior Center | Crossroads, MN | none |
| Rochester Public Library | Rochester, MN | https://www.rplmn.org/ |
| Stewartville Public Library | Stewartville, MN | https://stewartvillelibrary.org/ |
| 125 Live | Rochester, MN | https://125livemn.org/ |
| Elder Network | Rochester, MN | https://www.elder-network.org/ |

| Helpers | Resources |
|---|---|
| librarians | computer classes for seniors; robotics club for teens; public computers; free wifi; hotspot lending program; public meeting room |
| unsure | Internet Essentials program (discount internet service) |
| staff who work there; Stan, the Meals on Wheels driver who everyone knows | free wifi; daily lunch for seniors; public gathering space; Meals on Wheels delivery van |
| librarians | Public internet and computer use during all open hours; Connected Chromebooks for extended checkout; Chromebook with Internet for two-week checkout; Hotspots for two-week checkout |
| librarians | Public internet and computer use |
| staff and volunteers | Public interenet and computer use; Technology Center provide personal assistance with smartphones, tablets, computers, smartwatches, entertainment, and other technology. AARP Senior Planet licensed center providing classes and workshops on a range of technology-related topics. |
| staff and volunteers | Technical Assistance Program provides access to iPads and mobile hotspots for clients, 60 years of age and older, in need of assistance with technology access and education; Remote tech support; |

## Notes

not open after 7pm

Open 7 days a week. Serve Olmsted County residents. Library card or guest pass (no cost) study, and connection by families, researchers, those experiencing homelessness, students, seniors, and low income residents. Customers are reflective of the racial and ethnic diversity in our communitystudy, and connection by families, researchers, those experiencing homelessness, students, seniors, and low income residents.

Closed Sundays. No data on use, but observational estimates of 10-15 persons using each day
Membership or guest day pass required. Costs varies. Sliding scale. Facility open 7 days a week. Tech assistance Mondays 11a-1p.

Program serves seniors ages 60 and older who live in Olmsted, Winona, and Wabasha counties in Southern Minnesota. Training and support may be offered in these languages: English, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Chinese. We work closely with the Subject matter experts such as State Services for the Blind, and others to provide adaptations for clients with physical limitations such as vision loss.

Family Service Rochester Digital Connection Committee (FSRDCC)

**1-1 Interview Summaries**

*Female*
*Rochester, MN*
*58 years old*
*African American*
*Apartment*
*Living alone*
*Visually Impaired*
*Social Security; Seeking employment*
*Unemployed*

She recently arrived in Rochester from Jackson, MS. Where she lost her job there due to pandemic. She moved to Rochester where she has friends and is seeking employment. She receives social services and housing support.

She appears healthy. She does not report being isolated, but is experiencing being in a new town.

Visually impaired since childhood, has used computers with assistive technology. Currently she has a new mobile phone with voice commands and audio. She participated in an eight week training technology course from the National Organization for the Blind that also provides a help line.

She uses the phone to communicate with friends and connect with services. She has no concerns about making use of the phone. She has no concerns about connectivity.

She does not have any other technology, but hopes to acquire a workstation so she can return to remote work in customer support. She would need financial assistance to for both the workstation and the visual assistance software. She is concerned both are expensive. She would also appreciate any training she might need on new technology.

*Female*
*Stewartville, MN*
*Single-Family Home*
*89 years old*
*Living alone*
*Social Security; part-time employment*
*Employed part-time*

She moved from Iowa and downsized to her current location a few years ago. She has family in town. Though she has a chronic condition that requires a weekly medical procedure, she

appears otherwise health and remains active. She works part-time three days a week. Continues to drive. She receives a few social and chore services. She is well connected to her neighborhood and local family.

She owns and uses a mobile phone. She uses it for communication, connection to services and her health care provider patient portal. She feels she knows how to use her phone for the uses she needs. She has no concern about connectivity.

Her son gave her a laptop that she has not used. She would appreciate technical assistance but has not sought it. She would likely use the laptop for the same purposes as her mobile phone, but believes the laptop would make those easier. She might be interested in other uses like information or groups about gardening.

She is not that interested in going online, but cost is the main obstacle she sees in being able to do so. She expressed concern about not being able to use the technology ("messing it up"). She is wary of scams.

*Male*
*Byron, MN*
*Single Family Home*
*79 years old*
*White*
*Married*
*Social Security; pension*
*Retired*

He lives with his wife in the home where they raised their family. Their children and grandchildren live in the same and nearby communities. He reports he is in good health. He is socially active. Uses a few chore services to help around the home. Visits the local senior center for social purposes. He reports and appears to be living comfortably.

He owns a mobile phone, tablet, and workstation. He makes most use of the phone and tablet for communication, shopping, news, health care, and entertainment. He makes use of his health care provider's patient portal. He usually uses the workstation if he needs something printed. He believes he is careful and can identify potential scams. He has no concerns about connectivity.

He is satisfied with his technology. The mobile phone and tablet are up-to-date. The workstation is a relatively older model, but sufficient for his needs. He feels very comfortable and capable of making full use of the technology, but would connect with a family member first if he needed help. He reports no financial obstacles that might limit or prevent his use of technology.

**Additional Comments submitted by Elder Network:**

**Kathy Scheid, Executive Director**
**Elder Network**
**Rochester, MN**

**June 23, 2023**

The cost of internet, availability/access, and lack of knowledge about how to access and use devices have been the most prevalent needs we noted. Clients commented that training on how to use the device and internet access needs to be slow, repetitive, simple, and relevant to what they wanted to do on the internet. Transportation was also listed a deterrent to participate in a training as most of our clients do not drive or have access to transportation. Training in-home, where the device will be used is best.

A number of observations about needs follow:

1. A former Mayo employee in Rochester developed a health condition that put him in a serious financial situation and out of work. The surmounting medical bills led to him reside in low-income housing in a small town outside Rochester. He has been in AA for over 15 years and felt isolated and depressed. His family lives miles away. While participating in our program, he could email friends and family, participate in virtual AA meetings, purchase groceries and supplies to accommodate his diabetic requirements for food (items not readily available in the local rural food store), and investigate using a 3rd party device to monitor and record his insulin levels. He enjoys the companionship of the volunteer as well as listening to music and reading on his iPad.

2. Many agencies require documentation and payment online, rather than on paper. We received a call from Olmsted County Senior Aging Services about help for a couple wanting to make calls to their family out east. The dad is caring for wife who is on disability for memory loss and depression. We worked with the daughter who reached out to us to see if we could help set up an app to use to access Veterans' benefits and payments which were no longer being sent in paper form. The couple did not have cable or internet, so a hot spot was loaned. The wife would play songs on the piano to share with family members virtually and the couple was able to view a family wedding virtually as they were not able to travel.

3. Social security income of $1300 goes directly toward paying the assisted living residence monthly fee of $1100 for this client. She has no TV or close family and misses going to the library. She read about the iPad program in their newsletter and is now able to listen to music, read books online, and the newspaper.

4. This client works for Meals on Wheels and recently moved to a mobile home park in Rochester for financial reason, following medical treatment for cancer. She cannot afford

cable/internet due to medical bills and used her phone for internet access. She appreciated the larger screen on the iPad with our program and it went with her everywhere…she used it for notes, watched movies, made flyers for her work and uses email/ calendar to keep track of her daily activities.

5. The Veteran's Administration is committed to increasing Veteran's access to virtual care to access telehealth services. The Connected Tablet program study indicated veterans who used tablets reported high levels of satisfaction with care and less likely to miss appointments. Unfortunately, many who received the iPad did not use it because they did not know how to use it and better device monitoring was recommended. The personalized training and tracking and monitoring available with TAP is helpful in our local community.

6. A client learned about the iPad program from a participant in a virtual zoom class on Chronic Conditions. She is caring for her husband and was attempting to use an iPad that had been gifted to her. Changes in her internet and email provider created access challenges. Her children/grandchildren showed her how to use the iPad, but "they did it so fast, I couldn't remember what they said. I'm not comfortable asking them for help again." The iPad she was using was not supporting upgrades, so she was loaned an iPad—and with her volunteer, enjoying a new world of options. Her favorite apps were loaded onto the iPad and she currently is accessing the internet with the thought she will purchase her own device when she is confident with her skills. She likes the support and new challenges her TAP volunteer shares with her. She is able to discuss her caregiving role and husband's condition via email with family and medical resources this has helped her cope while she is caring for him. She learned through her support group about doodling and caregiving. This interest led to sketching birds she sees from her window. She takes a picture of the bird on her iPad and uses this as a guide to fill her sketchbook.

7. Another client went into hospital for hip surgery and brought her iPad with her. She was able to continue with her jig-saw puzzles, scrabble, and e-mail from her hospital bed, and now, in rehab, she continues with her activities on the iPad. The iPad is light-weight and portable, which is a benefit to her.