

Digital inclusion is the foundation of an equitable future and an inclusive economy

The pandemic has accelerated the movement of opportunities in jobs, education, health, services, social connection and more online. Digital inclusion is the key to providing access to these opportunities for all — and in dismantling our existing opportunity gaps.



Future jobs are online. More than 16 percent of Ramsey County job postings were fully remote in 2022, and even more offered hybrid work. The region’s economic future will require everyone to have the tools and skills needed to succeed in the online workplace.



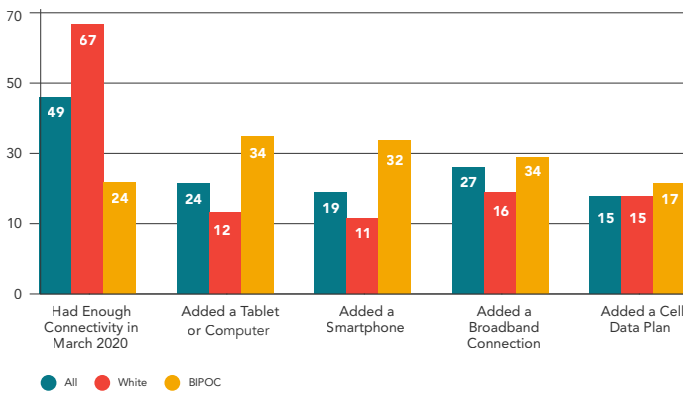
Digital Inclusion is essential for health. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation calls broadband access a “Super Determinant of Health” because it’s so essential for accessing everything needed for a healthy life: healthcare, housing, and more.



Public services are moving online. From voting and taxes to food benefits and probation, public services are increasingly online, making digital inclusion essential for accessing basic services.

Achieving digital inclusion is about people, not wires

Broadband maps show that almost all of Ramsey County is served by high-speed broadband wire, yet gaps in digital access remain – especially for people of color.



BIPOC Residents Started the Pandemic Disconnected. Just 1 in 4 Ramsey County residents of color had the connectivity they needed as the pandemic shifted life online. A full two-thirds of white residents had the connectivity they needed at that same time.

The Digital Divide Remains. Despite residents adding devices and internet service since the pandemic, many people still don’t have the devices and access needed to access opportunities online. Just under half of Ramsey County BIPOC residents engaged said they always have what they need to participate in online life as often as they’d like.

“Describe your connectivity at the start of the pandemic” (graph at left) - Ramsey County and Saint Paul residents of color had to add computers, smartphones and broadband connections at the start of the pandemic

Get connect, stay connected, know how to use the connection

Achieving digital inclusion will require comprehensive approaches that address systemic issues in technology, income, credit access and more. Residents of Ramsey County and Saint Paul’s connectivity needs are best seen as three-fold:

Get connected. People need access to devices and subscriptions to get online. That can mean phones, computers, and passing credit checks to get high data plans.

Stay connected. Connectivity is precarious for many. The benefits cliff can halt access to discounted internet programs. For others, one dropped phone or laptop could cost a family online access.

Know how to use the connection. Many people need help getting the confidence and comfort to navigate online, and language barriers can add further challenges.

