

Western New York Digital Equity Coalition Full Member

Meeting Notes

September 17, 2025

Attendance

- CJ Banks; Vice President for Strategic Partnerships and Career Advancement; Villa Maria College
- Megan Battista; Learning and Advocacy Coordinator; Liftoff WNY
- Jeremy Besch; Managing Director; Per Scholas Buffalo
- Rachel Bonsignore; Director; Liftoff WNY
- Hannah Brecher; Coalition Community Member; At Large
- Christine Carr-Barmasse; Executive Director; Mission: Ignite
- Courtney Deuro; Data Analyst; Center for Self Advocacy
- Megan Farry; Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships and Communication; NYATEP New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals
- Cynetra Ferguson; Small Business Resource Coordinator; Erie County
- Trent Hamilton; Coalition Community Member; Entrepreneur School of Thought
- Jacqueline Hovey; System Adult Outreach Services - TechKnow Lab; Buffalo & Erie County Library
- Solomon Joseph; Manager of Economic Empowerment; Native American Community Services
- Susan Kirkpatrick; Communications Consultant; Mission: Ignite
- Hex Kleinmartin; Digital Literacy Coordinator; Literacy Buffalo Niagara
- Dennis Lee; Coalition Community Member; Hopewell Baptist Church
- Don Matteson; Chief Program Officer; Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation
- Jake Moskal; Director of Employment Services; Journey's End Refugee Services
- Alisa Reimann; Assistant Recreation Coordinator; Erie County Dept. of Aging
- Mike Rogers; Regional Organizer; Self-Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYS)
- Abigail Smith; Digital Literacy Program Coordinator; Cornell Cooperative Extension, Orleans Digital Literacy Initiative
- Jessica Teng; Technology and Communications Associate; CCNY, Inc.
- Liz Warkentin; Senior Education Manager; Mission: Ignite
- Shannon Wichlacz; Senior Evaluation Associate; CCNY, Inc.
- Heidi Ziemer; Community Investment Specialist; Mission: Ignite

Announcements

- Hannah Brecher announced the annual Center for Self advocacy Healthcare Summit planned for October. The event will tentatively be held at the Jacobs Center, with Dr. Michael Lamb's continued support. The summit will focus on healthcare navigation, including electronic health records and digital inclusion connections. Committee work is beginning for event planning, with opportunities for community members to participate.
- CJ Banks announced the launch of Villa Maria's Creative Arts Entrepreneurship Center. First event scheduled for October 4th at Villa Maria College in partnership with SCORE and the SBA. It will be an all-day event covering business startup and management, including digital creation, intellectual property, and funding information. Contact information available for interested participants.
- CJ Banks announced the next AI Equity Task Force meeting scheduled for October. The task force is focusing on core goals and actionable initiatives.
- Jeremy Besch announced two upcoming Per Scholas cohorts starting in October. The in-person IT support cohort currently enrolling with available seats, and there will be a new remote class option starting October 14th for students unable to make daily on-campus commitments. Recruitment contact: Danielle Jackson (djackson@perscholas.org).
- Liz Warkentin announced plans for two cohorts of Mission: Ignite's Tech 360 Basic Chrome courses next month. Classes will be held at Mission: Ignite's community learning lab. Maximum capacity of 10 people (typically 5 per cohort).
- Christine Carr-Barmasse announced a new pathway partnership with Per Scholas for hardware training. The program is designed for Per Scholas graduates seeking additional hands-on experience. Participants can join Mission: Ignite's tech team for continued training and support.
- Megan Farry promoted NYATEP's annual conference in October ([2025 Fall Conference](#)).
- Megan Farry also noted that applications are open for the Workforce Policy and Advocacy Academy ([Workforce Academy](#)).
- Susan Kirkpatrick from Mission: Ignite reported successful outreach to Representative Tim Kennedy's office. Inspired by South Carolina Representative Jim Clyburn's video supporting Digital Inclusion Week, Representative Kennedy has agreed to film a 30-60 second video supporting the Coalition's work. The video will focus on the digital divide, coalition activities, and pledging support. The final video will be shared with all members for use on social media and newsletters.

Technical Assistance Grant Updates

Regional Digital Literacy Survey

- Don Matteson provided updates on the New York State Digital Equity Technical Assistance Grant's primary deliverable.
- Initial survey draft from consultants was off-target, focusing on general digital inclusion rather than digital literacy.
- Extensive feedback and alternative draft provided to consultants.
- Project running approximately 4-5 weeks behind schedule.
- December 31st deadline remains in place, though ConnectALL contact Nazeer Jeffries indicated willingness to extend into early 2026 if needed.
- Survey aims to capture community-wide digital literacy skills beyond just program participants.

Training and Development

Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Training

- Four coalition members are currently undergoing RBA certification training.
- Two RBA 101 training sessions scheduled:
 - October 3rd, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM (virtual)
 - October 10th, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM (virtual)
- Sessions will be recorded for reference.
- October 3rd session covers RBA overview, including turn-the-curve thinking, population accountability, performance accountability, and result statements.
- October 10th session builds on the first; attendance at both sessions recommended for full comprehension.
- Registration available at [RBA 101 signup](#).

Digital Inclusion Week Planning

National Digital Inclusion Week (October 6-10, 2025)

- National Digital Inclusion Alliance maintains event calendar for submissions.
- New York State Digital Equity Network collecting statewide event information.
- Original proposal for coordinated statewide awareness campaign did not gain traction at NYSDEN level.
- Individual organizations encouraged to plan their own initiatives.
- Coalition developing newsletter content and county-specific digital inclusion factoids for distribution.

- Infographic templates being created with three key points per county using American Community Survey data.
- Materials will include links to Affordable Broadband Act information.

NYSDEN Information Session

- New member orientation scheduled for Friday, September 19th at 1:00 PM.
- [LinkedIn announcement](#) available for details.

Coalition Resources Review

Website and Digital Assets

- Don Matteson provided comprehensive overview of coalition resources at wnydigitalequity.org.
- Website includes member directory, opportunities for involvement, and various resource collections.
- Monthly newsletter distributed to approximately 40 subscribers.
- Newsletter published the Friday before full member meetings.
- Newsletter submission form available at [submit news](#).

Email Communication

- Moderated email list available for member communications.
- Non-members can submit messages, but they require approval.
- List subscription and management available at [list subscribe](#).
- Traffic typically light with digest option recommended.

Resource Directory

- Comprehensive directory of digital inclusion and digital equity projects available.
- Significant library-related content integrated from Western New York Library Resources Council.
- Direct access at [initiatives page](#).
- Program submission form available at: <https://wnydec.link/form>.

Member Resources

- Full member meeting notes available dating back to September 30, 2020 (coalition inception).
- Steering committee meeting notes published for transparency.
- Newsletter archives available from November 2023 launch.
- Individual member directory accessible at [member directory](#).

Statewide Resources

- New York State Digital Equity Network website: nysden.org.
- NYSDEN represents coalition of 11 regional digital equity coalitions.
- August conference materials and presentations available online.
- New York State Digital Equity Portal: [NYSDE portal](#).

External Resources

- New York State Digital Equity Portal provides county-level data analysis.
- Portal utilizes American Community Survey data with approximately 2022 timeframe.
- Data includes five-year rolling estimates due to small population sizes in some counties.
- Portal collaboration between Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations and John R. Osche Foundation.

Technical Resources and Tools

TechKnowledgeMe Video Series

- Mike Rogers highlighted video resources for individuals with difficulty accessing digital meetings.
- Series designed for people with developmental disabilities but suitable for general audiences.
- Videos provide step-by-step guidance for digital meeting participation.
- Available at [TechKnowledgeMe](#).

Broadband Adoption Research

- Discussion of collaboration with researcher in Austin, Texas (Hari) working on broadband adoption clusters.
- Research focuses on ZIP code-based datasets from FCC, census, and other resources.
- Aims to measure broadband adoption versus access, addressing the gap between availability and utilization.
- Potential collaboration with local mapping and data analysis initiatives.

Infrastructure Updates

ErieNet

- Discussion of Erie County's fiber network infrastructure project.
- County received \$5 million grant from ConnectALL's Municipal Infrastructure Program.
- Project currently under construction with expected completion mid to late 2026.
- Early network segments anticipated to be operational by early 2026.
- Coalition members expressed interest in obtaining detailed project updates.
- Action item to reach out to Mike Breeden (County CIO) for comprehensive briefing.

Future Planning

October Meeting Preview

- Next full member meeting will focus on three strategic pillars identified during recent convening:
 - Community engagement initiatives
 - Political advocacy efforts

- Asset mapping projects
- Discussion will center on implementing community-based meetings and expanding outreach efforts.

Links and Resources Mentioned

- [WNYDEC Website](#)
- [Newsletter Signup](#)
- [Digital Inclusion Week 2025](#)
- [NYS DEN](#)
- [RBA Training Signup](#)
- [Project Status](#)
- [ErieNet Grant Announcement](#)