As an organization that represents 79K+ adult education providers, COABE is committed to elevating digital equity for adult learners so they can succeed and thrive in our increasingly digital world.

**Digital equity is a necessity for adult learners to participate in modern life.** Without reliable access to devices and the internet, learning the skills that can lead to sustainable wages is a non-starter. The reality is that 28.2 million households in the United States do not have high-speed broadband and 18 million households cannot afford to connect to the internet. The digital divide limits opportunity and creates barriers for adult learners to achieve their personal and professional goals.

It’s not just about digital access—adult learners need digital literacy too. If we are going to close the digital divide, digital literacy is essential because adult learners must be digitally proficient to participate in the digital economy.

**Millions of adult learners want to be connected and have the digital skills** they need to get an education, turn in homework, find jobs, earn credentials to start or advance their careers, access telehealth services, communicate with teachers, family, and friends, and participate in online banking and other financial tasks.

COABE recently conducted a Digital Equity Survey to which 558 program partners responded, representing 462,000+ adult learners. More than 376 responses indicated that one of the biggest challenges for adult learners was that WIFI and device issues hindered their learners from attending class or completing assignments.

129 responders indicated that their programs serve as a digital hub for WIFI and device dissemination for adult learners. And 397 partners responded that they offer digital literacy classes to their learners in spite of funding restrictions because the need is so great.

Doesn’t it seem logical that adult education programs can be the hub to expand these services if there was funding to #ElevateDigitalEquity? Adult education programs must receive funding commitments that invest in digital literacy skills training.

Now is the time for policymakers and funders to invest in digital equity and literacy to ensure a competitive workforce now and in the future, so adult learners are not left behind.
28.2 million
28.2 million Households in the U.S. that do not have high-speed broadband

18.1 million
18.1 million Households with available broadband infrastructure that cannot afford to connect

47 million
Population in the U.S. with available broadband infrastructure that cannot afford to connect

7.1 million
Households without access to any broadband network

Source: Education Superhighway

+32 million
Over 32 million adults lack basic digital literacy skills

28 million
28 million adults lack the basic digital skills needed to use a computer, yet most are using computers every day on the job

1 in 3
Nearly one in three workers lack foundational digital skills

38%
38% of workers with no digital skills have jobs that require either moderate or complex computer skills.

Half of Americans
Half of all Americans say they are not confident using technology to learn

Sources: Office of Educational Technology • COABE • National Skills Coalition • NCES

Impact on Adult Education

23%
In COABE’s 2023 member survey of adult education providers, only 23% serve as a digital hub for WiFi and device dissemination.

26%
About 26% do not have the WiFi and devices needed in the class; 58% reflected those organizations in rural/suburban areas.

39%
Only 39% of respondents indicated that their learners had devices and access to WiFi but had to share the device(s) at home.

67%
Close to 67% of respondents reported that the lack of WIFI and devices have negatively impacted adult learners’ completing assignments and/or attending class.

89,671
In just this small snapshot of COABE’s members, 89,671 adult learners have been affected by the lack of WIFI and devices.

Sources: COABE Member Survey 2023

Learn More At:
EducateandElevate.org/ElevateDigitalEquity