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Introduction

The internet is arguably the most important communication tool of the 21st century. Public opinion research routinely indicates that people understand the internet’s importance, with one 2015 national survey showing that 58% of individuals polled agreed that “Internet access is essential, and everyone needs it in the 21st century economy.”¹ This support cuts across political parties, with 69% of Democrats, 53% of Independents, and 47% of Republicans believing that internet access is essential.²

While there seems to be strong agreement about the internet’s importance, this critical resource is not distributed evenly. Roughly 30% of households across America lack broadband internet access.³ The statistics are far more grim for some communities, as 59% of households with annual income below $20,000, 46% of African American households, 50% of Hispanic [sic] households, and 55% of individuals 65 and older lack internet access.⁴ These disparities carry consequences. At a moment when 70% of teachers assign homework that requires the internet, children without broadband access at home are left without the ability to do their homework.⁵ Further, in an era when many job training and application materials (whether for jobs or schools) exist only in online form, a path toward economic stability is blocked for a large number of people who remain offline. The concern about internet access disparities led to the development of a field often referred to as digital inclusion or digital equity. The latter term is preferred by some scholars and
advocates, as it aims to combine an interest in broadband internet access with concepts of distributive justice and equity.

Research suggests that Baltimore lags behind many cities when it comes to the number of households with home internet connections, with the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2013 American Community Survey ranking Baltimore 261 out of 296 cities surveyed. (See Figure 1.) According to this same source, an estimated 74,116 households in Baltimore have no internet access. The national research indicating that lower-income and racial minority households are disproportionately disconnected from the internet could translate into particular concerns for Baltimore. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2014 American Community Survey and 2015 population estimates, median household income in Baltimore City was $42,665, and per capita income was $25,290, which is significantly lower than the numbers for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Local jurisdiction</th>
<th>Share of households with Internet</th>
<th>Number of households without Internet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Centennial, CO</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>1,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cary, NC</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
<td>2,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Irvine, CA</td>
<td>95.3%</td>
<td>3,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Frisco, TX</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>2,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bellevue, WA</td>
<td>93.6%</td>
<td>3,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gilbert, AZ</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
<td>4,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Boulder, CO</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>3,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pearland, TX</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
<td>2,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Plano, TX</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>8,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Scottsdale, AZ</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
<td>7,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261</td>
<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>74,116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig 1. Internet Connection Data and Rankings (Cities)*

2013 American Community Survey
In addition, according to these same sources, Baltimore City is 62.6% African American and 4.7% Hispanic [sic].

Cognizant of the importance of digital equity and having examined the research, the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and the Media Democracy Fund (MDF) wanted to study digital equity in Baltimore City. Specifically, the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and MDF wanted to know how digital inequality manifests itself in Baltimore. What specific factors contribute to the scale of the problem within the city? What ideas are circulating about how to improve the situation? What obstacles exist to closing the digital divide? What challenges have hampered past efforts? What new developments and untapped resources might be harnessed more effectively? These questions and others led the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and MDF to embark on a qualitative interview project.
The Interviews

The Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and MDF commissioned The Raben Group (Raben), a national public affairs firm, to conduct a series of interviews on digital equity issues in Baltimore City and the surrounding area. Interviewees included leaders from the government, nonprofit, and private sectors. More specifically, interviewees included: political appointees and career staff within the Mayor’s office; individuals from the public health community; policymakers and technologists from the public school system; real estate and economic development experts; leaders at tech and makerspace organizations; executives from nonprofit and community-based organizations (in areas such as education, housing, child care, and the arts); and small business owners. Diversity (both racial and gender) of the interview pool was also carefully considered. The initial list of interviewees stemmed from conversations with the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and MDF, but interviewees also suggested other names. This iterative process ensured that the final list of interviewees was not entirely determined by funders or outside consultants, minimizing the chance of a skewed respondent pool. In total, Raben interviewed 31 individuals in full-length interviews that lasted roughly an hour each. Attachment A provides a complete list of the individuals interviewed, along with organizational affiliations.

Interviewees were asked about their experience with digital equity in Baltimore. Respondents shared their perspectives on the most pressing challenges facing the city with respect to access to high-quality, low-cost broadband internet, as well as their ideas on who the key stakeholders were in this space. Interviewees were prompted to think not only of traditional partners and allies who work on digital access issues (such as government Chief Technology Officers and anchor institutions such as schools and libraries), but also of potential non-traditional allies who have a stake in improving digital inclusion. These potential non-traditional allies could include entities such as houses of worship, nonprofits that specialize in job training,
or programs aimed at helping the formerly incarcerated transition back into community life.

Interviewers also asked respondents to think of potential obstacles to making progress. These obstacles could be entities such as commercial internet service providers (ISPs) or other social issues vying for limited resources. When examining the substantive work to be done around digital access, interviewees were asked to name the single most important tactic for increasing broadband access for Baltimore City, as well as the single most important tactic for increasing broadband adoption rates. A concern for adoption rates reflects the understanding that even when low-cost, high-quality broadband internet becomes available, there might be other efforts, such as digital literacy education or hardware distribution programs (providing laptops or electronic tablets, for instance) that might spur greater numbers of people actually to avail themselves of the expanded internet access. Attachment B shows the questions posed to interviewees.

Depending on the background and expertise of the individual interviewee, additional tailored questions were asked. For example, questions about programming and funding were asked of interviewees from the government, and questions about community responses to prior digital equity initiatives were asked of interviewees from nonprofit and community-based organizations.
Key Findings: The Challenges

Many of the interviewees work directly on digital equity, either within the government or the technology/innovation sector, while others had an indirect connection to digital equity by serving communities that disproportionately lack broadband access. This latter group of interviewees often claimed a lack of familiarity with digital equity issues at the beginning of their interviews, but they ended up providing significant insights into the effects of lacking broadband access as the conversations progressed. Regardless of the directness of their connection to tech issues, interviewees spent the vast majority of their time describing the challenges to making gains in digital equity, and clear themes emerged.

SILOS AND LACK OF EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP

While many interviewees described promising programs or initiatives, they also noted a lack of cohesive strategy and collaboration across sectors in Baltimore. Unlike some cities that have a strong, empowered Chief Technology Officer or a broadband coordinating council, there appears to be no functional equivalent in Baltimore. One interviewee described a Broadband Coordinator position that began promisingly, but that expired in 2016. Without continuity, such a coordinating position is unlikely to bring about consistent, cross-sector change. In addition, different segments of the government have different responsibilities for different assets, and some interviewees described a sense of territoriality. According to one local entrepreneur, the Mayor’s office is technically responsible for fiber decisions, the Department of Transportation owns the conduit system, and the Department of Public Works holds other assets; none of these entities have clear incentives to work with each other. Apart from government offices/departments not working closely with each other, the government also does not seem to be working in any coordinated way with tech and
makerspace innovators or with community-based organizations. Efforts happen in what one interviewee described as “silos,” disconnected and uncoordinated with meaningful efforts elsewhere in the city.

“The only way this works is if every stakeholder participates. It’s not just local, state, federal ... but it’s also institutions, not just philanthropic organizations, but stakeholder organizations, and ultimately the private sector as well. We all have assets that contribute to this.”

— Business owner in the Baltimore innovation sector

One of our interviewees stated that there exists “a need for strong executive sponsorship,” meaning a need for some continuous signal from city government that broadband access is a priority and that there is a clear person or entity that is responsible.

“If you have strong executive sponsorship in a certain area, then you can marshal the resources to make it happen.”

— Baltimore City government employee

A number of respondents cited the high turnover rate within the Mayor’s Office of Information Technology as one of the significant challenges to coordinated progress.
Market Forces Fail to Drive Widespread Broadband Access

National research suggests that price is the greatest barrier to obtaining a household internet connection. (See Figure 2.) In some areas of the country, market forces and competition among ISPs can drive prices of broadband down and inspire investment in higher quality service. However, almost all interviewees mentioned the lack of ISP competition in Baltimore; Comcast enjoys a near total monopoly within the city. Broadband expansion nationwide, as mentioned by a leading technology consultant, has been driven by “growth and competition, which is what improves access.” Comcast, because of its near monopoly in Baltimore, has no incentive to provide higher quality, low-cost broadband, particularly in lower income neighborhoods. Additionally, Baltimore’s old infrastructure is a major barrier for fiber, which makes an investment in underserved areas of the city a more costly proposition for an ISP. Interviewees voiced skepticism about whether any market-based solution would expand access to poorer neighborhoods, as the profit margin would be small or nonexistent for a large ISP. A subsidy that provides qualified, low-income individuals the ability to exert more consumer power was one idea that was offered. Another idea would be to combine subsidies with community eligibility in order to create a more attractive consumer base for ISPs. This tactic might not work to lure a large corporate ISP into poorer neighborhoods, but over

**Fig 2. Why those without home internet access do not have it in the U.S.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too expensive</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just don’t need it</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Internet through other devices</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet too slow in my community</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use computers/ Internet elsewhere</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer isn’t working</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am planning to get it</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental concerns</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Joan Ganz Cooney Center: Opportunity for All?*
time, it might create enough incentive for smaller, community-based ISPs to provide service.

“You can’t rely on anyone in the private sector to fix this. And even if they did [express interest in entering the market], if you gave them that opportunity, the profit motive wouldn’t exist.”

— Business owner in the Baltimore innovation sector

LACK OF TRUST IN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Several public sector interviewees shared information about efforts by the City of Baltimore to bring residents online. In particular, efforts to bring residents online at certain housing developments, including Cherry Hill and Gilmor Homes, were described at length. Despite financial incentives (in the form of gift cards) provided to encourage residents to test out access to the internet, the acceptance and adoption rate was low. According to interviewees, the entire initiative ended up being unpopular. If the City of Baltimore, private institutions, or funders were to launch a new program to bring residents online, it is imperative that they employ trusted voices from within each community to do proper outreach and messaging. Communities of color, immigrant communities, and those in low-income areas have little reason to trust a city official who is unfamiliar with their neighborhood. If instead a community member or leader who lives within the neighborhood were to approach residents and explain the benefits of going online, the result might be different. This added trust could be because the community member speaks the language of that community, physically looks like the residents of a neighborhood, or is simply known to community members. Harnessing trusted community voices,
even if the basis for this trust was developed outside of the tech context, will be key to increasing broadband access and adoption.

“It was really difficult to get people to turn out and sign up. We had 200 gift cards offering one year of free Internet Essentials, and only 43 were taken up. There is a need for massive grassroots efforts to go door-to-door, but we do not have that manpower.”

— Baltimore City government employee on the challenges of rolling out the Comcast Internet Essentials program
Developing in Baltimore and Failure to Aggressively Leverage Public Interest Commitments

Baltimore holds tremendous potential for innovation. Tech leaders are providing funding and resources to encourage innovation and small business development, makerspaces are open across the city for public use, and companies such as Under Armour are making large investments in one part of the city. In addition, there is significant construction and development underway. However, the development boom has not translated into clear benefits for the more economically fragile communities in Baltimore. Somewhat surprisingly, while there was broad awareness of Under Armour CEO Kevin Plank’s $5.5 billion investment in the Port Covington development project, no interviewee mentioned Kevin Plank or Under Armour as an untapped ally in closing the city’s digital divide. In addition, interviewees from the development community did not mention broadening access to the internet when discussing development in Baltimore. Some interviewees mentioned that when the city leases its fiber assets, it often strikes deals with developers to do certain beneficial things for the community in order to secure these long-term leases. However, none of the interviewees could cite any commitments that involved digital equity. When questioned, no one could cite a development agreement that required, for instance, the broadcast of a signal to adjacent communities, or the creation of a number of WiFi hotspots in neighboring public spaces. The interviews suggested that the city’s appetite for development, with its attendant potential for job creation, might be preventing city leaders from aggressively leveraging public interest commitments from developers.

“...there’s an opportunity to tie into the development and developers to bring an incentive to them as they do new development in areas that aren’t necessarily low-income.”

— Maryland State policymaker
While the lack of high-quality, low-cost broadband options seems to be the reason that many Baltimore residents are not online, the majority of interviewees mentioned digital literacy education as a critical part of bridging the digital divide. If community members do not understand the possibilities provided by internet access, they are less likely to seek and demand broadband access. While going online to use the internet might not sound enticing on its own, community members are encouraged to go online when relevant functionalities are presented. A broadband connection cannot be presented as the goal, but rather as the enabling mechanism to help individuals meet their true goals. For instance, if the true goals are applying for jobs online, completing an online college application, or communicating with family members via FaceTime or Skype, internet access simply makes those goals attainable.

“There is worry that those on lower income scales will get left behind in other areas. There’s the issue of people who are well-versed in using social media, but not skilled in all of the other digital concepts that allow them to succeed at their job ... in a lot of cases, people don’t fully understand. There’s a need to help increase awareness of the possibilities and benefits of internet access.”

— Baltimore City government employee
Low-income communities and communities of color, in particular, lack access to adequate hardware, such as desktops, laptops, and electronic tablets. In Baltimore, almost 20% of the city’s households are without a computer. (See Figure 3.) While certain libraries and public schools provide access to devices for their patrons and students, this largely limits device access to school or library hours. A few nonprofits allow their devices to be used by program participants, even in off hours. However, the reality is that the majority of low-income residents rely on cell phones to access the internet. Many of these mobile phones are not smartphones, which further limits their functionality. Yet even smartphones would not provide a complete solution. While smartphones provide an opportunity for going online, computers and laptops allow for greater use of the internet. Applying for jobs online, completing a college application, or taking an online training course is difficult, if not impossible, using only a smartphone.

“From the standpoint of real inclusion and how Americans use the internet — how homework gets done, how education happens, how we anticipate healthcare delivery, mobile isn’t really a great alternative. It should be a complement to, not a substitute for, broadband.”

— Representative of the private sector
Without adequate hardware, entire communities are unable to engage online or access the full potential of the internet.

“[There is a] level of privacy needed to complete the job at hand, a job application for example, and [the people we see] are unable to do so … The majority of people are doing business off of their phones, which is expensive and insufficient.”

— Leader of Baltimore-based nonprofit organization
Opportunities and Next Steps

The interview project represents the initial step in examining digital equity in the city of Baltimore. The environmental scan allowed the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and MDF to understand better the challenges and obstacles to narrowing the digital divide. Interviews tended to focus on the challenges, and the interview project could be considered the diagnostic phase of a project to understand digital inequity in Baltimore. In brief, the challenges are real, but these same challenges suggest a template for progress, as briefly outlined below.

- **Greater coordination.** Efforts by city government entities, nonprofit organizations, and private industry need to be coordinated to have maximum effect. Not only will such coordination help make efforts more effective and minimize duplication of services, but coordination might spur greater sustainability and might generate additional interest from funders and stakeholders not currently engaged in digital equity work.

- **Strong executive sponsorship.** Whether with the Smart City Task Force or the city’s Broadband Coordinator position, it is clear that interesting work began but was not supported continuously. Strong executive sponsorship, likely in the form of a clear and sustained city government commitment to digital equity, could help immensely. Stability and consistent leadership in the Mayor’s Office of Information Technology would be a solid first step.

- **Greater ISP competition.** Given Baltimore’s 2016 signing of a new 10-year franchise agreement with Comcast for cable services in the city, greater competition in the immediate future seems unlikely. However, work can be done to educate the public and city decision-makers about competition’s importance in improving broadband access and service. In addition, modest subsidies for residents in underserved areas and benefit aggregation (using the subsidies to many individuals to create something akin to community...
eligibility) could begin to create conditions that would foster market entry of new ISPs in the future.

- **Deployment of trusted community voices.** Deploying trusted voices both to speak about the relevance of the internet and to promote new programs could help ensure that future initiatives are as successful as possible.

- **Stronger negotiation of public commitments from developers.** A number of impressive development projects are proceeding in Baltimore. The development agreements that are common between developers and the cities in which they build can provide the basis for future commitments to digital equity. Future development agreements in Baltimore can and should attempt to leverage commitments to expand broadband access to underserved areas of the city.

- **Need for digital literacy programs.** Programming and education that focus on relevant skills (filling out online job applications, online banking, health research, or FaceTiming with relatives, for instance) can ensure that when affordable, high-quality broadband service becomes available, adoption rates will be high. In addition, illustrating in a practical way the utility of internet access in people’s lives will help to build public pressure for a government commitment to digital equity.

- **Attention to hardware needs.** Advocacy for expansion of affordable, high-quality broadband throughout the city should be accompanied by a conversation about providing affordable access to some of the devices that will allow this internet access to be fully appreciated.

Finally, additional assets that cut across several opportunity topics bear mentioning. These people and developments reflect resources that interviewees felt could be useful in future efforts to narrow the digital divide. These assets and opportunities include:

- **City Council.** The Baltimore City Council has a large number of new members who are younger than the members they replaced and do not yet have
signature issues. One or two of these members could be cultivated as champions for digital equity.

- **Anchor Institutions.** Several interviewees mentioned public libraries and public schools as positive forces with potential yet to be tapped. The use of school premises (and tech equipment) after school hours by community members is something that might merit further exploration, as would the possibility of schools or libraries broadcasting signals to surrounding communities. Signal broadcasting wouldn’t solve the problem entirely, but it would at least bring internet connections to residents immediately adjacent to schools and libraries, which are buildings that are distributed throughout the city.

- **Tech Sector and Higher Education.** While interviewees consistently mentioned the tech sector favorably, it is clear that the tech sector could play a larger role in addressing digital equity concerns. In addition, Baltimore has a number of world-class universities, including the University of Maryland, University of Baltimore, and Johns Hopkins. Each of these institutions of higher learning provides great device and internet access to students and employees, but whether and how this translates into a benefit for the universities’ surrounding communities is unclear.

- **Returning Residents.** According to some estimates, roughly 8,000 individuals annually return to Baltimore City after experiencing some form of incarceration. These are individuals who have strong workforce reentry needs in an era when many job training resources and job applications are online. While interviewees did not always have a clear sense of how this could be harnessed, this population was mentioned more than once.

- **Powerful Neighborhood Associations.** Several interviewees mentioned the strength, high activity level, and political clout of neighborhood associations in Baltimore. These entities could be more strongly engaged in digital equity advocacy.

- **Development.** Development carries the potential of development agreements between developers and the city. This has been described in various places throughout this report. In addition to the agreements, however, development
also generally spurs zoning and planning conversations that could provide the opportunity to discuss public WiFi spots and the creation of vibrant public spaces. One interviewee described these spaces as “third spaces” — places that were neither work nor home.

“Third spaces are public access points that allow for community building and engagement. They allow you to not be who you are at home or who you are at work ... When you strip neighborhoods of these third spaces, you’re stripping them of access; they become dictated by that person’s income and mobility.”

— Baltimore community activist and small business owner

These interviews represent one step toward the development of a holistic digital equity plan for Baltimore. There is more to be learned from the experiences of other cities, as well as from others in Baltimore. The Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and MDF are contemplating a series of convenings to share learnings and engage community members. These convenings would bring together key Baltimore stakeholders to discuss innovative digital equity initiatives in other similarly situated cities, brainstorm about how such initiatives might be deployed or modified to suit Baltimore’s needs, and share ideas about what needs to happen to make progress in Baltimore. In addition, it is hoped that such convenings could begin to generate excitement about the results that can come from even small-scale programs.

One interviewee described the small-scale changes that were made to buildings when former President Barack Obama visited Baltimore. For a span of 48 hours, because of signal-boosting devices, certain underserved areas of the city experienced meaningful internet access for the first time.
DIGITAL ACCESS AND EQUITY IN BALTIMORE

“We typically have difficulty loading a large file, but were able to send documents with the new bandwidth as put in by the Secret Service. As soon as the President left, that bandwidth went away.”

— Founder of a Baltimore nonprofit service organization

Conveying this sense of what might be possible — and the transformative nature of broadband access — to a set of stakeholders with the power to influence policy is one of the underlying goals of the forthcoming convenings. At the end of this work, the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and the Media Democracy Fund hope to spur initiatives that will bring the internet’s promise to a larger segment of Baltimore. The city’s residents deserve no less.
Attachment A: List of Interviewees

Matt Barinholtz, FutureMakers
Greg Cangialosi, Betamore
Joseph Carella, Mayor’s Office of Information Technology
Brian Checco, AiNET
Bill Cole, Baltimore Development Corporation
Dianne Conley, Digital Harbor Foundation (Board Member)
Stacey Davis, Baltimore City Public Schools
Lanaea Featherstone, The Featherstone Foundation
Bill Ferguson, Maryland State Senate
Andy Frank, Johns Hopkins University
Mike Fried, Baltimore City Health Department
Jennifer Goold, The Neighborhood Design Center
Jason Hardebeck, The Foundery
Adam Holofcener, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
JoAnne Hovis, CTC Technology and Energy
Joe Jones, Center for Urban Families
Susan Malone, Wide Angle Media
JD Merrill, Baltimore City Public Schools
Ashley Minner, Artists U Baltimore (Coordinator)
Ellie Mitchell, Maryland Out of School Time
Jason Perkins-Cohen, Mayor’s Office of Employment Development
Alison Perkins-Cohen, Baltimore City Public Schools
Aisha Pew, DoveCote Cafe
Cindy Plavier-Truitt, Humanim
Ray Skinner, East Baltimore Development Inc.
Joyce Stewart, Housing Authority of Baltimore City
Kenneth Thompson, Baltimore City Public Schools
Greg Urban, Department of Information Technology, State of Maryland
Mark Wagner, Think Big Networks
Terrell Williams, Turnaround Tuesdays Prisoner Re-Entry Workforce Development Program
Christy Wyskiel, Johns Hopkins University
Attachment B: Questions

INTRODUCTION

The Raben Group worked with the Media Democracy Fund and the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation to examine broadband access and digital inclusion (sometimes referred to as digital equity) in the Baltimore City area. We sought diverse perspectives to delve deeper into the challenges to digital access in Baltimore City.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Please provide some background and overview on your experience with digital access in Baltimore (as it pertains to public education/technology access/business development).

2. What do you see as the greatest challenges that Baltimore City faces in terms of increasing access to broadband, especially for lower income and communities of color? As work is done not only to increase broadband access, but also to increase the diversity of providers, are there stakeholders who might oppose or be threatened by these efforts?

3. What do you see as the greatest challenges that Baltimore City faces in terms of increasing access to broadband, especially for lower income and communities of color? As work is done not only to increase broadband access, but also to increase the diversity of providers, are there stakeholders who might oppose or be threatened by these efforts?

4. Where do you see the greatest opportunities for increasing digital equity in Baltimore City? Are there any untapped resources, or new developments that you see as key pieces that would lead to greater digital access?
5. Who are some of the key partners, allies, peers, and competition to keep in mind when thinking about digital access in Baltimore City?

6. Who are some of the non-traditional partners, allies, and peers you think should be included in the development of greater digital access in Baltimore City?

7. What do you view as the single most important tactic that could be put in place to increase broadband access in low-income and communities of color?

8. Does the art/artist community of Baltimore have a role to play in access to broadband?

9. In addition to access, what do you view as the single most important tactic that could be deployed to increase not only broadband access but also broadband adoption rates? (e.g., digital literacy efforts, privacy protections, etc.)

**EDUCATION-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**

1. Are there existing programs/initiatives that address digital inclusion/equity issues in Baltimore City Public Schools?

2. What is the state of technology and access to the internet for students in Baltimore City Public Schools? In other public places such as libraries?

3. What is the greatest challenge that public schools face in terms of broadband access? What is the greatest need of students? Of teachers?

4. Where do you see the greatest gaps in broadband access? Do you see any areas that are making realistic strides towards increasing digital inclusion/equity?

5. Have students or parents raised the issue of broadband access (and the need for greater access) in the community?

6. Who are some of the greatest resources/allies/advocates for increased broadband access for public schools?
QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO MAYOR’S OFFICE

1. What are some of the existing programs/initiatives in the Mayor’s office that address digital inclusion issues? Is this something the Mayor prioritizes?
2. Who are some of the Mayor’s office’s greatest allies in terms of digital inclusion?
3. Are there non-traditional partners/allies that the Mayor’s office is beginning to or has engaged with to increase digital inclusion?
4. What do you see as the greatest challenge for the Mayor’s office to tackling broadband access?
Endnotes


2 Id.


4 Id.


6 City of Baltimore website, documents available at http://planning.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/2a_City%20Profile%20-%203.30.16_0.pdf and http://planning.baltimorecity.gov/planning-data#Education.

7 The Robert W. Deutsch Foundation is a nonprofit foundation based in Baltimore. For over two decades, its work has focused on supporting and transforming the city through media, technology, and the arts. Additional information about the Foundation and its work is available at http://rwdfoundation.org.

8 The Media Democracy Fund is a nonprofit public charity that works with foundations, companies, philanthropic advisors, and individual donors to ensure that media and technology policies reflect principles of equality and democracy. Additional information about the Fund and its work is available at www.mediademocracyfund.org.


10 The franchise agreement between Baltimore and Comcast is to “construct, operate, and maintain a cable communication system.” It is a non-exclusive franchise that applies to cable television and technically would not prevent other companies from entering the market to become broadband providers. However, given the popularity of bundling cable television and broadband internet services, multiple interviewees suggested that it makes market entry for other providers significantly more difficult.