

Access and Digital Inclusion - Submissions

1. I would like to see a panel discussion about the intersections of access and inclusion, specifically focused on impoverished communities.

Comments: ISOC-DC has a project in Baltimore, where according to the Governor's Office for Children, 33% of the children in Baltimore City live in poverty, 44% of all households do not have access to the Internet. Nationally, a quarter of people living in rural communities live in poverty and only 69% of rural communities have access to the Internet, compared to the broader U.S. average of 87% (source: Statista). Part of inclusion is ensuring those in vulnerable contexts have a pathway to full participation in an increasingly connected society. What role should work around access play in this proposed pathway? Should equitable access be considered a governance issue?

2. The technology readiness of the USA - from assessment to data-based policymaking.

Comments: The NRI considers a country's performance in technology, the strength of its governance, its commitment to supporting people abilities development and how they can access and benefit from technology, and the impact it wields on the global stage. We are preparing a specific short country study, and this topic relates to various of the Categories identified below. See <https://networkreadinessindex.org/>.

3. Ensuring robust broadband connections during the COVID pandemic.

Comments: COVID has shown the internet is essential. Everything is online now, but even before the pandemic, millions of Americans lacked an internet connection either for lack of physical access or the connection is unaffordable. The situation is way worse now. That has to change, and the Emergency Broadband Benefit (recently passed by Congress) is a start.

4. New forms of connectivity: what alternative mechanisms can provide Internet?

Comments: With the Biden administration's commitment to rural broadband, and Project Loon's recent shutdown, it is worth asking what Internet access should look like. What other models apart from Fiber to the home might do the trick? Will 5G provide all the connectivity we need, or should we consider satellites, or even mesh networks? Examining the state of how Internet can be provided will be a valuable question for considering the future of connectivity.

5. Will climate change contribute to unreliable Internet? Are we delivering service via the correct methods?

Comments: Should we be pushing for more fiber delivery?

6. Rural Connectivity : Challenges & Issue

Comments: I am Vice Chair of Rural Development Special Interest Group of ISOC , if given opportunity I may also speak on the subject

7. Access and Digital Inclusion

Comments: Expanding wireless access used by Libraries to cover more areas around them. Important when a library is closed because of a pandemic. Gigalibraries.net has done some great series on this and has lots of topics that we could explore for our panels

8. Enhancing global connectivity - an assessment of the technologies used and to be used, especially satellites (has their time come?)

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Comments: Notwithstanding the demise of Google's Loon project, there are a variety of innovative ways to deliver Internet connectivity globally. It especially seems like LEO satellites are becoming more of a reality in this regard (see SpaceX and Amazon's Project Kuiper, for example). An assessment of the state-of-play and what this means for ensuring a globally connected "one" internet seems pertinent.

9. **Community and mesh networks and other connectivity solutions in the lens of COVID-19**

Comments: Community and mesh networks are innovative alternative solutions for communities in both rural and urban areas to build out connectivity when the private sector will not or when prices are not affordable. These custom-built solutions can ensure that communities gain connectivity in a way that is sustainable and useful for their residents. COVID-19 has caused some communities struggling with connectivity to consider solutions such as these, but some states and localities have introduced laws that would prevent them from being built in areas where there is private sector infrastructure investment. This issue is particularly interesting in light of COVID-19 as many in-person activities — school, work, events, and more — have moved online. Broadband is essential in today's digital world, and a session on the role of communities and local governments in connectivity would discuss the options that the US is facing to connect Americans.

10. **How locally-driven initiatives can provide a framework for sustainable, cost-effective solutions to bridge the digital divide**

Comments: There is no one size fits all approach to bridging the digital divide. Each community has unique realities, cultures, and needs that are best met by inclusion of local communities in the solutions. An effective, sustainable approach requires that trusted institutions and people within each community are consulted and worked with.

11. **Internet Accessibility for Those With Disabilities**

Comments: The internet has produced incredible advances in creating an experience for those with disabilities equivalent to those without disabilities. Further, demographic trends (e.g., the aging Baby Boomer generation) have led to the creation of niche market opportunities to service those with disabilities. Platform owners and the developers who leverage their ecosystems have recognized the responsibility to develop technology that is accessible and usable by everyone, including those with disabilities. This session should feature software developers, policymakers, as well as industry and civil society stakeholders, who can educate, and share perspectives with, IGF-USA member about the latest cutting-edge collaborations in creating internet accessibility for all – both challenges and opportunities.

12. **The Essential Role of Digital Technologies in Progressing the American Healthcare System**

Comments: "The scale of the COVID-19 pandemic is enormous and its impacts have placed unprecedented burdens on our nation's healthcare infrastructure. To address these challenges, Congress, federal agencies, and states are taking numerous steps to enable wider use of connected health tools to serve patients during the public health crisis, yet disparities and inequities continue to persist. With a new Administration in place, and the impacts of COVID-19 worsening, the work is just beginning. Patients'

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increasing reliance on digital health and telehealth services—accelerated by the pandemic— caused policymakers to pivot to better enable the use of digital health tools, yet many hurdles remain in place. What opportunities and challenges lie ahead in ensuring access to connected health technologies that improve health results and create long-term cost savings?"

13. Digitalizing Government Services for Post-COVID-19 Recovery

Comments: Digital Government Services: IGF USA considered in its 2020 program how various online services have become essential during the COVID-19 crisis. Indeed, governments that have digitalized are sustaining services as remote work dominates, protecting workers, and enabling businesses to operate. Governments slow to digitalize risk their economies and people falling further behind. Policymakers should prioritize moving paper-based processes (e.g., licensing and permitting) online in order to meet the needs of citizens and businesses during and following the COVID-19 crisis. Other benefits of government digitalization can include reducing opportunities for corruption, upskilling public officials in digital processes, and stimulating the economy. Investment projects paralyzed by the slowdown in administrative processes during the COVID crisis represent exactly the shovel-ready stimulus that our economies so need right now.

14. Connectivity and Digital Poverty during the Pandemic

Comments: The ongoing pandemic has underscored the urgent need for connectivity for those who remain unconnected to broadband (or Internet) technologies. As billions of people around the planet benefit from online education, telehealth technologies, working from home or other locations using video conferencing; and using connectivity to keep their business afloat digitally when their physical facilities were forced to close, billions of other global citizens fall further and further behind during this crippling pandemic. In an age of digital affluence for some of us, digital poverty is even more crippling for those who are not connected. The UN, ITU, FCC, civil society and industry all have a role to play in connecting the unconnected. The pandemic has widened the gulf between the connected and the unconnected and has underscored the need for urgency for connectivity. Numerous civil society organizations including ISOC, GIGA, the World Wide Web Consortium, the ITU's Broadband Commission and national regulators, including the FCC, are working to address this issue and would be appropriate to discuss what is being done and what more needs to be done. The world, and particularly those on the wrong side of the digital divide, need more urgent and more focused attention to this issue.

15. Ensuring the voices of persons with disabilities are heard in internet governance

16. How well has the tech industry helped people stay connected, informed, educated, productive, and entertained during COVID?

17. Promoting Socially Inclusive Digital Transformation through strategies including (1) digital “on-ramps” and (2) an inclusive future of work.

Comments: Promoting Socially Inclusive Digital Transformation: The covid-19 pandemic is both an economic crisis and a digital inclusion crisis. A failure to extend the benefits of digital transformation across the population risks economic fragmentation and growing distrust. Advancing robust digital inclusion will require socially inclusive digital transformation strategies including (1) digital “on-ramps” and (2) an inclusive future of

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work. Digital on-ramps are institutions and processes that help connect marginalized populations to the digital economy (e.g., “blended” digital-physical commerce). Facilitating these on-ramps will require us to re-imagine policies (e.g., updated tax and zoning policies to create flexibility across digital and physical, or redefined labor classifications for mobility). An inclusive future of work, meanwhile, can be realized through people-centered approaches to technology such as automation. At IGF 2021, stakeholders should identify strategies and corresponding policies, such as those described here, that enable a socially inclusive digital transformation.

18. The effect of the digital divide for students needing online learning during COVID-19.

Comments: Panel should include a teacher, a student, and an administrator to discuss the effects of online learning and what steps were taken, what worked, what did not, and what needs to be done.

Promoting Socially Inclusive Digital Transformation through strategies including (1) digital “on-ramps” and (2) an inclusive future of work.

19. Bridging the Digital Divide: We need all of the tools in the toolbox to bring connectivity to millions of Americans left out.

Comments: "Many Americans have no access to high-speed internet. In a time of distance learning, telemedicine and remote work, this digital divide has become more urgent and tragic than ever before. To connect all Americans, regardless of location, to the lifeline that is broadband, we need to use all of the tools in the toolbox. What does that mean? It means public/private partnerships, stopgap measures like rolling Wi-Fi hotspots, innovative technologies like LEO satellites, the removal of obstacles to fiber deployment, community engagement and more. This is a complicated multisector issue, so this panel will consist of broadband experts from the public sector, government and civil society. Participants could include: - Gigi Sohn, Georgetown Law Institute for Technology Law & Policy and Benton Institute - <http://gigisohn.com/> - Kathryn de Wit, Manager, Broadband Research Initiative, The Pew Charitable Trusts - <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/about/experts/kathryn-de-wit> - Darren Accord, Public Policy, Amazon's Project Kuiper - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/darren-achord-a3a91712/> The Glen Echo Group is happy to facilitate the panel and promote it. "