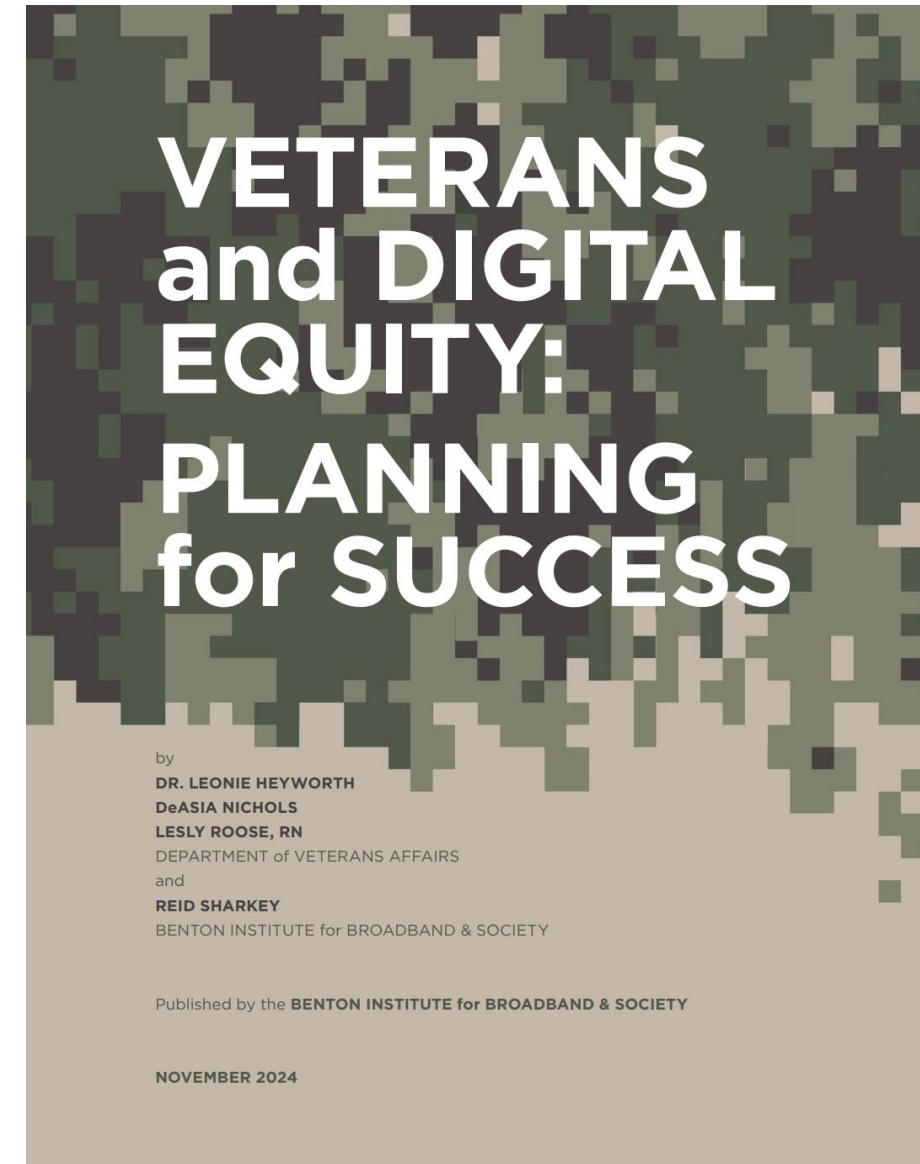


Veterans and Digital Equity Planning for Success

- Benton Institute report written in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Connected Care
- Analysis of all 50-state digital equity plans to identify best practices



VETERANS and DIGITAL EQUITY: PLANNING for SUCCESS

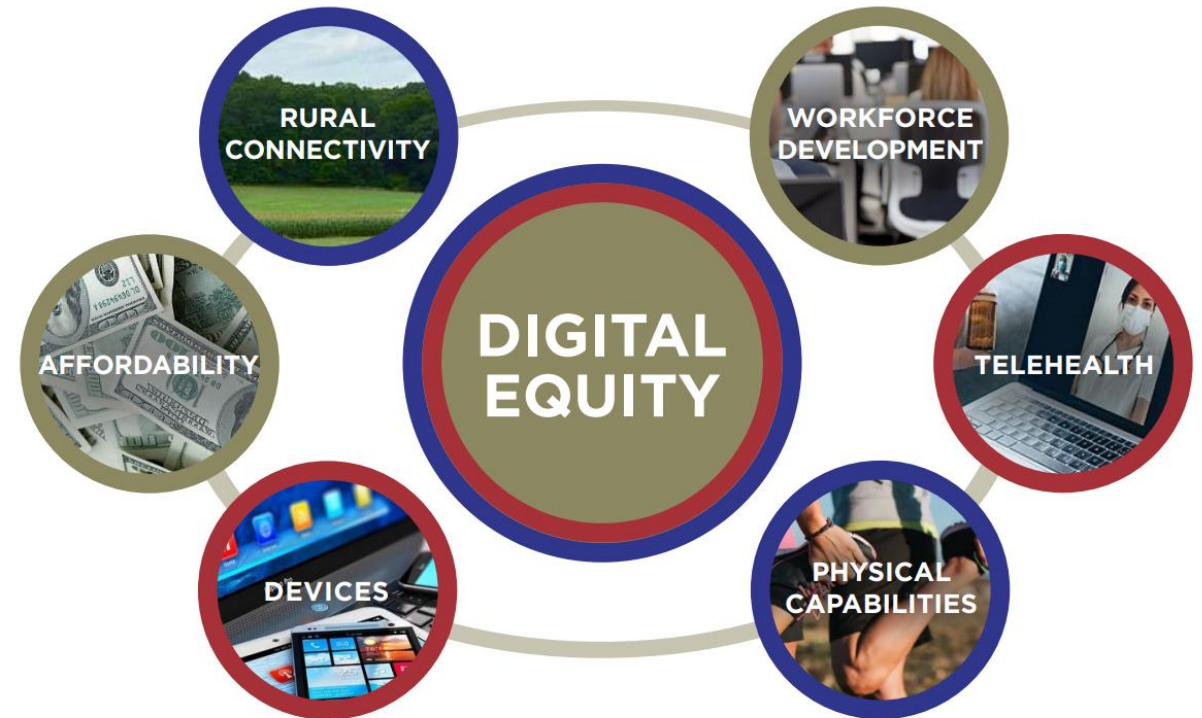
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We found that states adopted five key strategies in their plans to serve Veterans needs

- Link needs assessments to their implementation strategies,
- Leverage other state and federal agencies,
- Identify specific standout partners,
- Design a workforce strategy for Veterans, and
- Prioritize access to health care.



Common Barriers to Serving Veterans

Some plans tend to group Veterans together with other covered populations where there may be a lot of intersectionality.

Lack of localized support organizations providing support to Veterans.

Lack of wrap-around services to address other needs such as housing, healthcare, and financial literacy.

Telemental Health is Life-saving for Veterans

- In 2014, [researchers found](#) that one in four Veterans meet the diagnostic criteria for a mental health issue, with one in 10 struggling with multiple conditions.
- VA has repeatedly found that telemental health treatment is just as effective when compared to in-person treatment. In fact, a [recent study](#) found that recipients of VA tablets through the Digital Divide Consult program who were at risk for suicide had a 36 percent reduction in suicide-related emergency department visits.

Walter Prescher, an Army Vet who now works as a Digital Navigator in Texas, recalled his 54-mile drives to VA therapy sessions during which he often experienced stress triggers because he was “used to scanning the roadway for IEDs” during his service in Iraq. Had telehealth resources been available to him, Prescher could have avoided some of these triggers.

Strategies for Uplifting Veterans through Digital Workforce Training

Colorado's Veterans Upward Bound Colorado Program assesses Veterans' digital needs and offers free academic programs and devices.

Florida has established a Veteran success center at the Miami Dade College campus as a pathway program toward education and employment in the broadband sector.

Utah's Department of Workforce Services developed a Veterans State Grants and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program that provides specialized assessments, career counseling, training, and referrals for Veterans.

Kansas's plan highlights VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment Program (VR&E) as a resource for Veterans to improve their digital skills to advance their careers.

*Recently retired service members are often cited as a resource for the expanding cybersecurity field, which is expected to grow by **ten percent** from 2022 to 2032.*

In other cases, Veterans return to civilian life without access to broadband and lacking the digital skills required to fill out job applications online, even when their service experience makes them highly qualified members of the workforce

Policy Recommendations



CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE
NEEDS ASSESSMENT.



DEVELOP TAILORED DIGITAL
SKILLS PROGRAMS AND A
WORKFORCE STRATEGY.



PARTNER WITH STATE AND
FEDERAL AGENCIES AND
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS.



INVEST IN UNDERSERVED
AREAS.