A more equitable future through digital literacy and adoption.
FOUNDING MEMBERS
MISSION:

A share of future spectrum auction proceeds should be dedicated to endow a mission-driven Digital Equity Foundation to make sustainable investments in digital literacy and adoption. This is essential to ensure that new broadband efforts close the digital divide long term.
More than 1 in 5 Americans still lack broadband internet at home, including millions with access who have not adopted it. The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated a digital divide that disproportionately afflicts low-income, elderly, rural and BIPOC communities.

The federal government is now dedicating tens of billions of dollars to broadband deployment and affordability – but relatively little funding to the third driver of the digital divide: the need for digital literacy and adoption.

If people don’t know how to use technology, or cannot tap its value for basic needs, our efforts to connect them are fruitless.

For economic development, job growth, educational opportunities, disability access, telehealth, and so much more, we need trained digital citizens.
THE OPPORTUNITY

There is a large source of funding that can address this problem: **Spectrum Auction Revenue**.

- Like land in the agricultural era and energy in the industrial era, the public airwaves are a key driver of wealth creation in the digital era. They are owned by the American people.
- Auctions of public airwaves have generated more than $200 billion since the 1990s - and more than $100 billion in 2021 alone.

**In 2022 Congress will extend the FCC’s auction authority** and decide whether the $30 to $50 billion or more in revenue will be recycled into the sector – and for what purpose.
It makes sense to designate a substantial portion from the sales of this public resource to endow a Digital Equity Foundation to make sustainable investments, year after year, in digital literacy, apps, devices and training to close digital equity gaps.

Because auction revenue is unpredictable in both its timing and amount, it is an appropriate source to fund a Digital Equity Foundation to make sustainable investments that complement deployment and affordability.

- Access
- Affordability
- Digital Equity
THE NEEDS MET

An endowed **Digital Equity Foundation** can address critical needs:

**Public Purpose Apps, Training & Evaluation**
- Education tech (e.g., learner variability, demonstration projects)
- Telehealth and public health
- Disability access
- School & library initiatives to close the Homework Gap
- Modernized online access to public benefits & services

**Digital Literacy & Adoption**
- Community-based Digital Navigator Programs
- Libraries & community technology centers
- Local outreach and assistance to expand enrollments in ACP, Lifeline and other programs
A federally-chartered, independent Digital Equity Foundation provides great benefits, including:

- **Sustainability:** An endowment provides the certainty of support year-after-year – and the ability to evolve to address new digital equity gaps as they emerge;

- **Expertise:** Advisory groups with a broad range of expertise – and representing diverse stakeholders – can direct and redirect the foundation’s priorities;

- **Innovation:** A foundation can raise additional funds, fund innovative tools, prototypes and pilots, and promote partnerships;

- **Governance & Accountability:** The foundation should be transparent, include federal input/oversight, and report annually to the Senate and House Commerce Committees.
THE PRECEDENTS

Legislative visionaries have long established that the monetization of public assets – including the public airwaves – can be dedicated to a forward-looking investments in the national interest.

FirstNet Public Safety Network Trust Fund:
- In 2012 Congress designated $7.5 billion in future spectrum auction proceeds to fund the FirstNet Public Safety Network – the interoperable network recommended by the 9/11 Commission.

Federal Land Sales to Fund Education
- The Land Grant Colleges Act of 1865, signed by President Lincoln during the Civil War, transferred 77 million acres of federal land to states to establish public colleges.
- Earlier, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 sold frontier lands to finance K-12 education.

It’s uncontroversial: Senate and House Commerce Committees leaders from both parties have embraced this concept in other recent auction legislation (C-band).
This Congress is likely to make two key decisions this year:

- Renewing the FCC’s auction authority
- Deciding whether the $30 to $50 billion in revenue from future auctions will be recycled into the sector – and for what purpose

As it did with FirstNet in 2012, Congress can designate a substantial portion of the future revenue from this public resource by endowing a Digital Equity Foundation.

**We have the opportunity to overcome digital equity challenges by leveraging a natural resource we already have: the spectrum around us.**
JOIN US

Endorse this initiative!
Join us in asking Congress to designate a substantial portion of future spectrum auction proceeds to endow a Digital Equity Foundation.
QUESTIONS?