"5 As" of Digital Inclusion

Access + Applications + Affordability + Accessibility + Assistance= Adoption

Access refers to the infrastructure necessary to use broadband to reach applications on the Internet. Access in California is primarily, although not exclusive an issue in rural communities. In rural California, fewer consumers have access to the Internet using broadband than in urban California.

Applications refer to the content online. Data indicates 32% of those not online say they are just not interested. Research also indicates more culture and community specific content is needed to attract underserved communities to the Internet. Content must be relevant to the lives of the target audience to increase adoption.

Affordability refers to the total cost of "being wired". It includes price of online devices (computers, cell phones, wireless cards) and monthly service, maintenance, support, training and upgrading technology. While it is true that the price continues to drop and the capacity continues to go up the cost can be prohibitive for low-income families. Only 21% of families with incomes of $30,000 annually or lower have broadband service. The prices continues to be an obstacle to inclusion.

Accessibility refers to the ease of use people with disabilities have when using equipment and services needed to access the internet and using websites and applications online. The more accessibility is considered and addressed the more people with disabilities will have equitable access to the 21st century.

Assistance refers to cost of technical support, training and upgrading technology over time. These services are difficult and can be costly for even those with means. The technology for the online participation still has a way to go before it is "plug and play." Because this is considered a critical element in closing the Digital Divide in underserved communities the Board responded to practitioners by adding it to the 5As originally approved. Many believe one reason cell phones, games and big screen TV are so popular is that they are "Plug and Play". Do you have any ideas to more broadly deploy broadband?