



## **There Are Extensive & Persistent Divides Between Those Who Can Easily Access the Internet and Those Who Cannot**

**State of Play:** “The debate on whether internet access is a luxury or an essential component for survival is over.”

The digital divide is an equity issue that exacerbates disparities around educational achievement, voter participation, economic mobility, and countless other nonprofit priorities. With COVID-19 cases predicted to fluctuate in the coming months, increasing access to internet and digital services is critical to ensure the global pandemic does not further isolate or neglect vulnerable members of our communities.

### **Immediate Action is Needed to Improve the Quality of Life Amid COVID-19.**

- In 2019, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reported that 21.3 million Americans lack access to broadband availability. It’s abundantly clear that there are extensive and persistent divides in this nation between those who can easily access the internet and those who cannot
- While the CARES Act's initial investment of \$50 million to provide internet service, devices and tech support was a step in the right direction, more emergency funding is required to meet community needs
- To resolve this issue, the next COVID-19 relief package must appropriate a minimum of \$15 billion in emergency funds to support broadband internet access: \$12 billion to close the homework gap through connected devices and hotspots, \$3 billion for emergency home connectivity, \$200 million for telemedicine grants, and \$24 million for broadband mapping.

### **Nonprofit Services Require Reliable Internet Access.**

Affordable and accessible broadband is a necessity for all, regardless of race, income or geographic location. During these extraordinary times, the people served by the nonprofit community are increasingly dependent on reliable internet in order to access a variety of nonprofit services, including public health information, telemedicine, unemployment resources, education, artistic inspiration, religious services, and more.

Congress must act swiftly to ensure that households in all communities can fully participate in school, telemedicine, job search, and spiritual or cultural programs

**The Digital Divide is an Equity Issue that Plagues Rural & Urban Communities Alike.**

While the systemic fixes needed to permanently close the digital divide may be beyond the scope of the forthcoming package, a significant investment to expand access to critical, life-sustaining services is an attainable and necessary measure that must be taken

**Nonprofits Are Trusted Sources of Information — Our Collective Advocacy is More Important Now than Ever.**

Research indicates that nonprofit roots and trust within communities provide ample opportunity to increase civic engagement among those who are regularly excluded from the democratic process. Our natural engagement assets and unparalleled reach make us particularly well suited to encourage active civic participation. As the nation's third largest employer, nonprofits are able to organize 12.3 million employees and mobilize networks of donors, volunteers, and constituents across 1.5 million organizations

**Take Action Today.**

As we seek to help underserved communities recover from this unprecedented crisis, we implore you to submit a [letter](#) to your members of Congress to urge emergency funding to bridge the digital divide.