

## How Civic Infrastructure Supports Digital Equity

Long before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 15 million public school students lacked internet access at home which prevented their ability to complete homework. This homework gap disproportionately affected Black, Indigenous and Latine families. The shift to virtual classrooms during the pandemic widened the digital divide and limited learning opportunities for millions.

The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network had long recognized digital access inequities and pivoted quickly during the pandemic to bridge the digital divide.

### A CLOSER LOOK: Charleston, South Carolina



Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative is part of the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network defines digital equity as every member of the community has the information technology capacity to participate fully in our society, democracy and economy. This network member is rallying private, public and nonprofit sector leaders to ensure digital inclusion for every individual, including the most disadvantaged.

The pandemic left more than 4,000 students in Charleston County public schools without technology and/or high-speed internet access. Across the county, more than 11,000 residents had no access to high-speed internet. The Tri-County Cradle to Career Digital Equity Coalition gained the support of

local funders and government leaders to shift resources to pilot to expand digital accessibility and adoption for digital equity and inclusion strategy. The intent is to build a skilled workforce, community development, economic development. The pilot includes access to internet-enabled devices, affordable high-speed internet subscriptions and access to digital and financial literacy training, online learning opportunities, increased access to basic needs, and community navigator.

“We can’t change educational outcomes for children if we’re not impacting the systems that surround children and families,” said Tri-County Cradle to Career CEO Phyllis Martin. “We now have a shared definition and a shared vision for what digital equity looks like, and that would ensure that all individuals and communities have information, technology, capacity for full participation in society and the economy.”

### STRIVETOGETHER: WHO WE ARE

StriveTogether is a national network of nearly 70 communities across 28 states and Washington, DC, working to build a future where a child’s potential is not dictated by race, ethnicity, zip code or circumstance. The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network impacts the lives of more than 11 million youth — including more than 7 million children of color. For more information about StriveTogether, visit [strivetogether.org](https://strivetogether.org).