ADDRESSING ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGES

for reaching people virtually

While virtual meetings offer convenience by accommodating public participation wherever people are, we must be mindful of potential barriers to participation faced by some.

Understanding the special needs of people who live, work, shop, study, or travel in our plan or project area helps us respond to communication challenges that could negatively impact our engagement goals.

Florida (2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates)

1 in 7 households have no Internet access

1 in 3 households with income below $20,000 do not have Internet access

POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Access to virtual public meetings may be harder for some and impossible for others based on one or more of the characteristics below:

- Internet availability
- Internet quality
- Interest in the internet
- Technical proficiency
- Income (e.g., internet affordability)
- Culture (e.g., technology restrictions)
- Physical abilities
- English proficiency
- Literacy level

DATA ABOUT HOUSEHOLD INTERNET ACCESS

U.S. Census Bureau Data

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) reports household Internet access by the following categories:

- Households with broadband
- Households with dial-up
- Households with cellular data
- Households with satellite data
- Households with no internet access

Beyond the Data

Remember that demographic data provides a snapshot but not the complete picture. Be sure to talk to those who regularly engage the community (e.g., local government staff and social service organizations) to learn more about the population groups in your study area.

TIP

ACS demographic data is searchable down to the block group level at data.census.gov. In the website's search bar, type "*Internet*" and select *Table S2801: Types of computers and internet subscriptions*. Then select *View All Tables*, *Customize Table, 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables*, and the desired *Geographies*.

Making Your Virtual Public Meeting More Accessible

Always provide a call-in number. This gives people without a computer the ability to call in and listen.

Provide a contact person and telephone number in the meeting notification inviting those needing assistance a way to request it.

Offer to mail hard copies of the presentation materials. If someone does not have computer or Internet access, they can follow along by phone. Make sure to number the pages and announce the page when shown during the meeting.

Post the recording of the virtual public meeting online. Those who could not join the live meeting because of an access issue may find a way to view the recording.

Have a longer public comment period after the meeting. Consider at least 20 days to allow time for the public to view the meeting recording and submit comments.