



2026

Digital Equity

Digital Access as Community Infrastructure

When residents can fully participate in digital life, the whole community is stronger. In Santa Barbara County, reliable internet influences whether a child can complete homework, a family can access health care, or an individual can pursue new personal and professional opportunities. Yet too many residents face slow connections, unaffordable costs, or a shortage of devices. These are gaps in our shared systems, not reflections of individual circumstance. The Santa Barbara Foundation is committed to closing them.

Structural Challenges



Connectivity & Infrastructure

Rural communities face infrastructure gaps, and high costs create barriers even where service exists.



Device Access

Many households rely solely on smartphones for internet — limiting their ability to complete coursework, apply for jobs, or access services that require a full computer.



Digital Skills

A connection and a device aren't enough. Many residents lack the digital literacy skills needed to navigate health care, employment, and civic systems with confidence.



Coordination Gap

Across the county, many organizations are working to improve access to the internet, devices, and digital support, but these efforts are not yet reaching everyone who needs them.

Our Approach

Convened by the Santa Barbara Foundation, the Digital Equity Coalition brings together county partners to improve access to the internet, devices, and digital support. By coordinating their efforts, partners can share resources, attract funding, and build stronger solutions so everyone has a fair chance to participate in school, work, health care, and daily life.



Photo: 2023 State Digital Equity Planning Regional Workshop - Pacific Coast Region

Our Impact in 2025

When residents have reliable internet, the right devices, and the skills to use them, opportunity expands — across education, employment, health care, and civic life.

1,500+

Residents trained
in device use

60+

Trainings delivered by
community partners

60+

Partners engaged
countywide

NEW

Centralized web
resource, SBCDEC.org

Data from Digital Equity Coalition End-of-Year Update (SBF), 2025, and other internal and partner-reported sources (SBF), 2025.

Photo: Veronica Slavin

Looking Ahead

In 2026, the Digital Equity Coalition will focus on:

- Expanding digital literacy and broadband adoption programs
- Building shared data systems to better track and guide countywide efforts
- Deepening coordination across public, private, and nonprofit partners

Photo: Veronica Slavin

Join Us

The DEC connects partners working to expand digital opportunities across Santa Barbara County. Visit **SBCDEC.org** to explore programs, resources, and ways to engage partners.



Give Now

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