

The Center for Digital Equity Introduces do.OS to Help Communities Build Digital Opportunity

New Model Moves Beyond Device Access to Prepare Residents for an AI-Driven Economy

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, August 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Center for Digital Equity (CDE), based at Queens University of Charlotte, has unveiled the Digital Opportunity Operating System ([do.OS](#)), a new community-based digital

equity model. The foundation of CDE's next three-year [strategic plan](#), do.OS is a framework that helps communities connect existing digital equity resources and services into one coordinated pathway so residents can access technology, build digital skills and gain the confidence needed to create lasting economic opportunity.

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do.OS is built on a simple premise: getting people [online](#) is no longer enough. As artificial intelligence changes how people look for jobs, access benefits, and manage their health, the real challenge is not just having a device, but knowing how to use new technology with confidence. For a community member, do.OS in action may look like attending a digital skills class, receiving guidance from a CDE Digital Navigator, obtaining a personal laptop, and then connecting with workforce, healthcare, education and community organizations to support their continued

progress. Digital opportunity starts with access to a device, but it continues with ongoing support that helps people reach their goals, whether they're looking for a job, pursuing an education, accessing healthcare or connecting with friends and family online.

“Since being entrusted with significant capital from investors in the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative in 2021, we launched a bold vision centered around the belief that everyone should have the chance to succeed in an increasingly digital world,” said Bruce Clark, executive director of CDE. “In the years that followed, we learned that providing access to technology is just the



beginning. Thanks to the support of partners, funders and the broader community, CDE's approach has evolved from a single-county initiative focused on digital access to a broader statewide model that will focus on a holistic approach to digital opportunity."

Since its inception, CDE has built a network of more than 150 community partners that collaborate to strengthen digital skills, advance policy conversations, support workforce readiness and build lasting partnerships that connect people to essential services. The Center for Digital Equity's five-year and FY26 impact report, available online in interactive formats, highlights the many ways in which CDE and its trusted community partners have connected thousands of residents with critical resources, advancing digital equity and opportunity.



Impact at a Glance:

- CDE's Digital Navigator program connected 11,273 residents with personalized support through 15,503 Digital Navigation interactions.
- More than 20,000 devices were distributed to residents, through initiatives such as Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's MeckTech program, E2D, and Human-I-T's Gold Membership program.
- 1,000+ community-based training events held throughout the Carolinas.

The report pairs these outcomes with key lessons learned that will shape CDE's work moving forward, moving beyond individual initiatives and separate programs toward the new do.OS model that will help communities build coordinated systems of access and support.

Moving Beyond Device Access

New collaborations with organizations such as Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont and the Cabarrus County Library System also increased access to cybersecurity education, workforce technology skills and device support during 2026. This work came to life through the launch of the ConnectTech program and later, the ConnectTech+ program. Delivered alongside partners such as Caterpillar Ministries and Camino, ConnectTech is a high-impact digital skilling

initiative where trained community members called Digital Navigators help residents build confidence using technology—at locations such as libraries, workforce programs, and housing communities.

“Many of the families we work with don’t have a computer in their home. They’re doing their schoolwork, job applications, and everything on a phone. Some of them don’t have internet access,” said Sarah Fortner, executive director of Caterpillar Ministries. “Our partnership with the CDE addresses those gaps, helping us equip our community with the devices and the digital skills they need to feel empowered and included.”

As programs launched, consistent feedback from participants, partners, and CDE’s Community Council helped CDE evolve initiatives to better align with community needs. For instance, ConnectTech+ classes moved beyond basic device access, providing residents with job-readiness, AI skills and cybersecurity training. These learnings, along with five years of program implementation, partnership work, digital skills training, and device distribution, informed the development of the Digital Opportunity Operating System (do.OS).

Over the next three years, CDE’s team will focus on building and scaling do.OS. CDE will measure its success using shared data, standardized metrics, partner reporting and community surveys, while continuing to apply research-based methods and community feedback throughout implementation. By weaving digital opportunity into civic infrastructure, do.OS is designed to help communities strengthen digital literacy and create lasting impact across the Carolinas.

Explore CDE’s do.OS (Digital Opportunity Operating System) three-year strategic plan, a strategic framework that brings partners together to build what’s next and create lasting impact.

About the Center for Digital Equity

The Center for Digital Equity, based at Queens University of Charlotte, works to ensure every community member has the tools, support, and skills to navigate digital life confidently. In partnership with more than 150 local organizations, CDE embeds digital opportunity into the fabric of communities across North Carolina—one trusted relationship at a time.

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