



Bridging the Digital Divide: Expanding Digital Equity and Broadband Access in the Region

James Fuccione – Mass. Healthy Aging Collaborative
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Point32Health
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AARP[®]

- ✓ Age-friendly environments foster health and well-being and the participation of people as they age. **They are accessible, equitable, inclusive, safe and secure, and supportive.**
- ✓ Without age-friendly environments, health for all cannot be achieved.
- ✓ Creating barrier-free and affordable housing, accessible public spaces, and transportation enable people to stay independent and participate in community life.
- ✓ **Older people play a crucial role in their communities** – they engage in paid or volunteering work, transmit experience and knowledge, and help their families with caring responsibilities.
- ✓ ...These contributions can only be ensured if societies foster their health and participation.

Our Story:

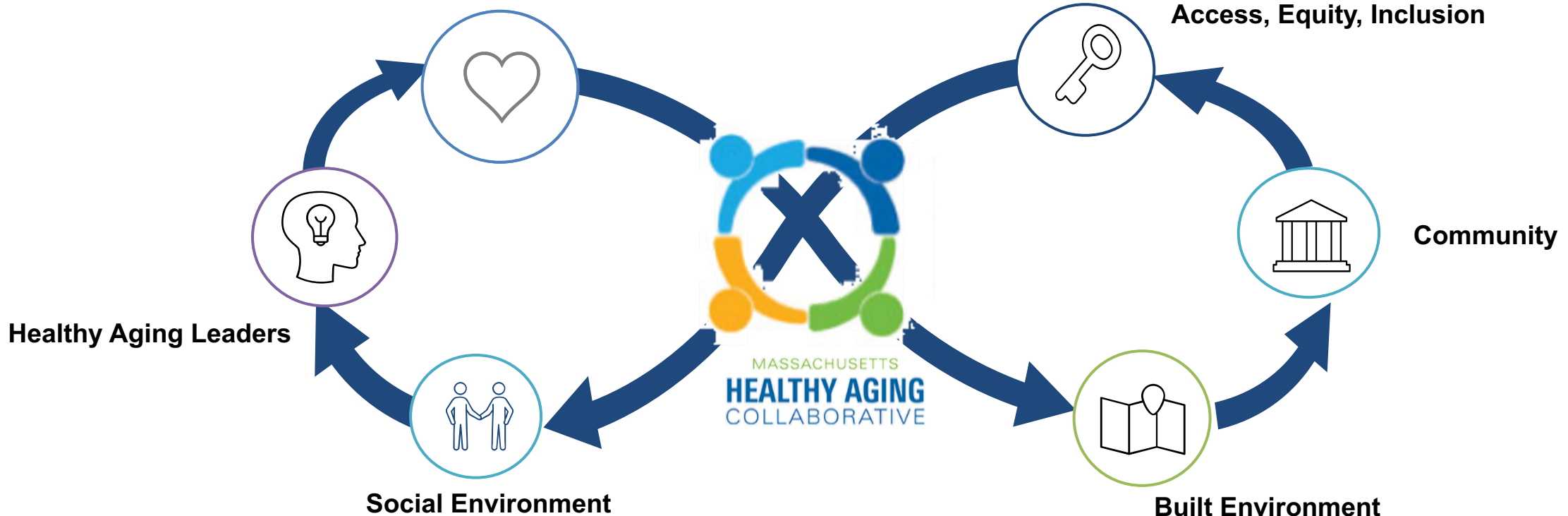
The strength of this movement is in our broad, diverse network of stakeholders and communities that can accelerate positive change collectively.

Our Value:

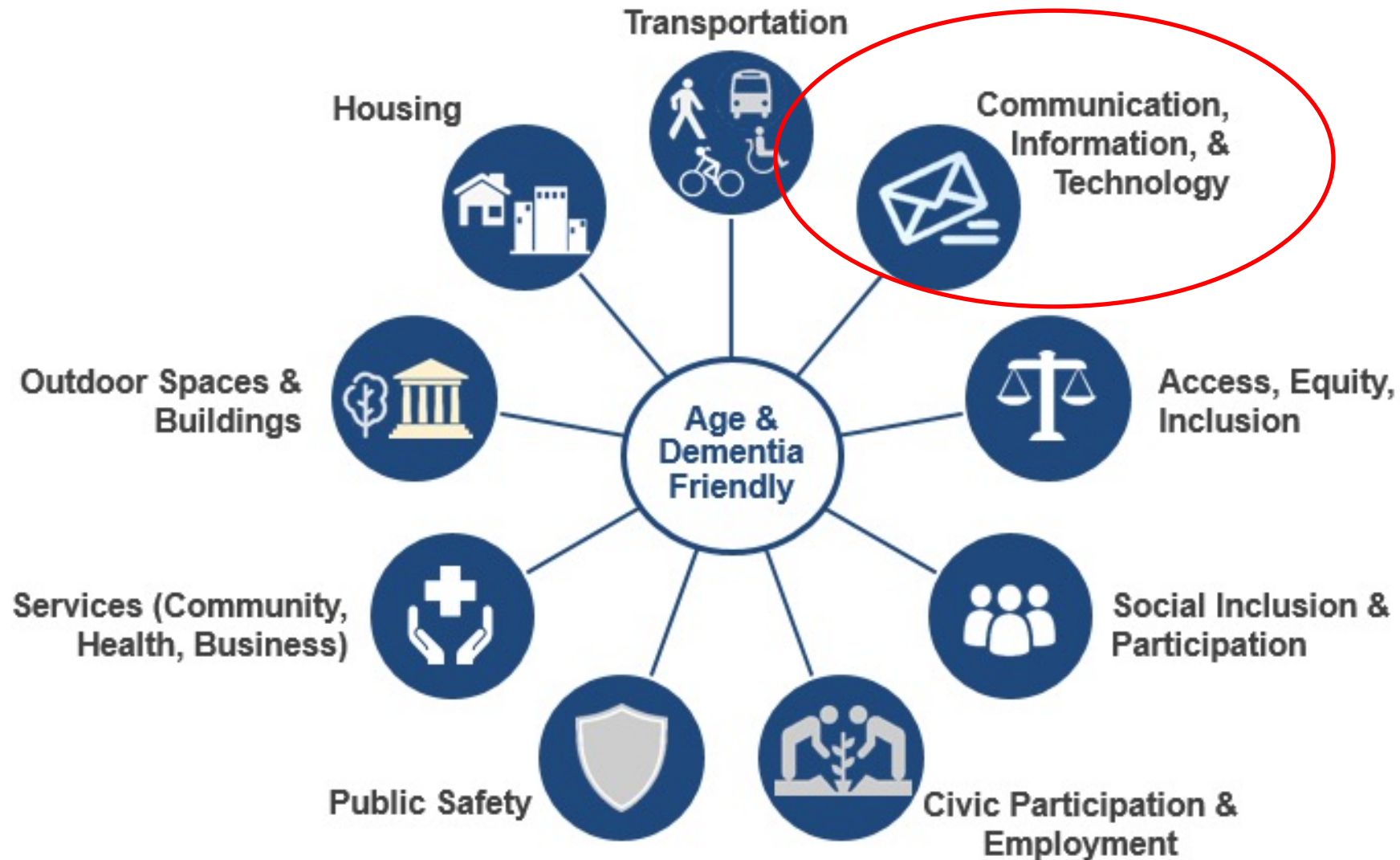
- An engine for momentum, capacity-building, dot-connecting and cooperation
- Our network and ability to connect potential partners (statewide and locally), resources, & funding opportunities
- Our ability to identify, replicate and scale positive changes.

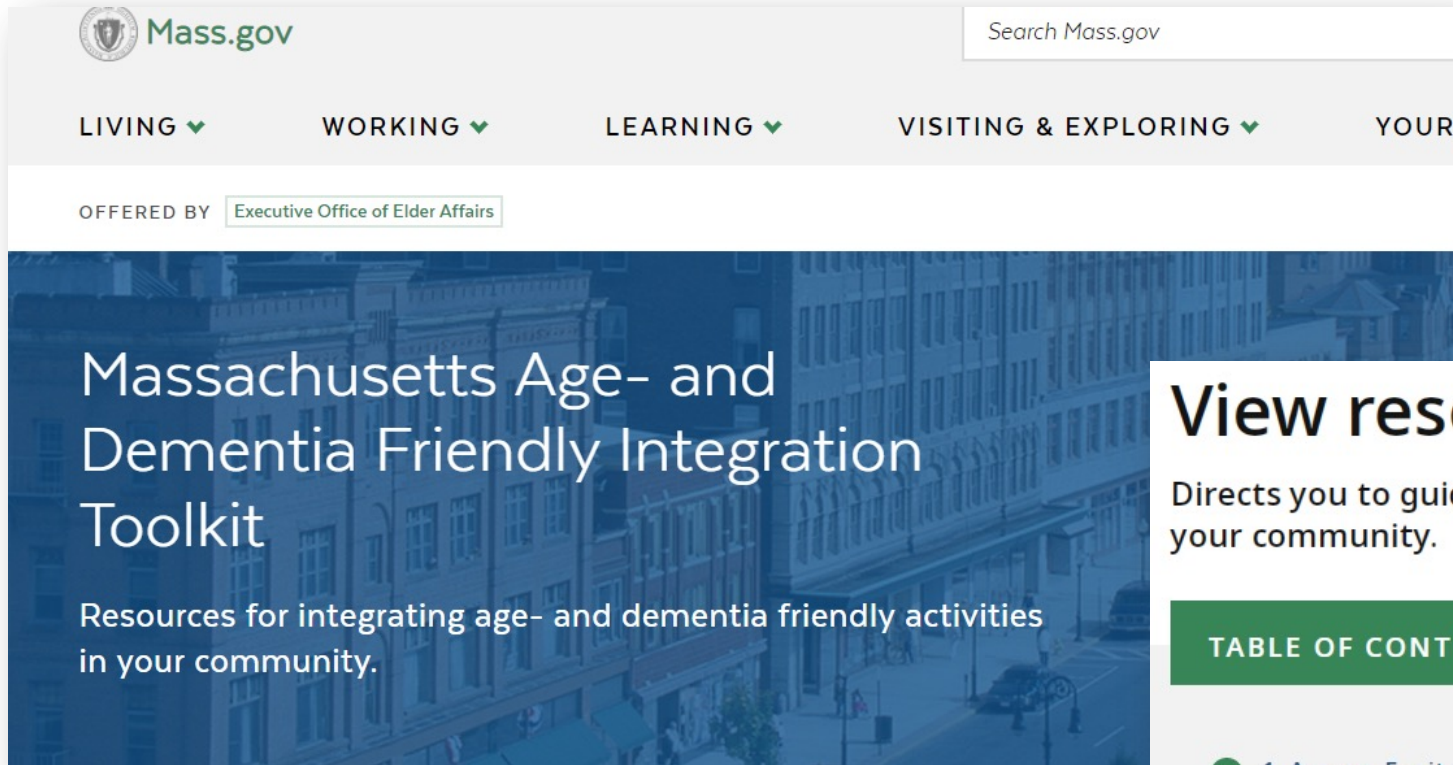
Aging Services and Supports

Access, Equity, Inclusion



Age and Dementia Friendly Communities





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Massachusetts Age- and Dementia Friendly Integration Toolkit

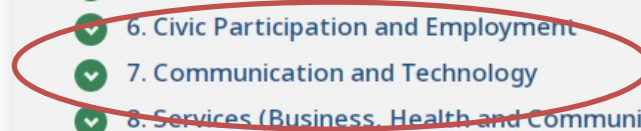
Resources for integrating age- and dementia friendly activities in your community.

View resources by focus area

Directs you to guidance on integrating age- and dementia friendly work in your community.

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DATA REPORT

OUR WORK

AGE-FRIENDLY

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Digital Equity Resources

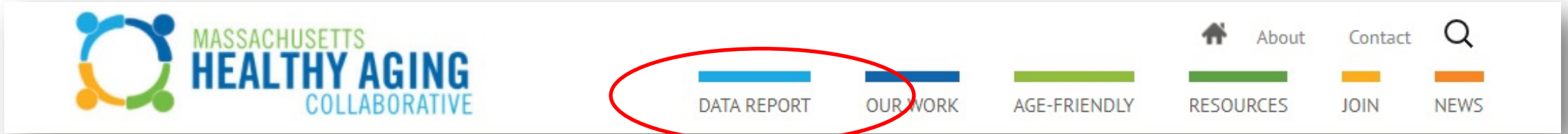
Community Resource Guide: Technology Access and Programming for Older Adults Aims to Bridge the Digital Divide

The pandemic has shined a light on the importance of technology in our daily lives. Access to technology, including internet use, is a social determinant of health – helping us connect with others, engage in our communities, work remotely, and receive vital information and services.

Technology access is important for people of all ages.


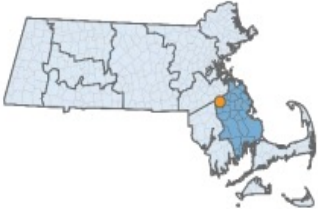
This fall, the [Massachusetts Task Force to End Loneliness and Build Community](#) published a short resource guide for communities looking to start or strengthen technology access and programming for older adults.

The guide includes resources, examples, and practical tips based on the belief that successful technology programs operate as a three-legged stool – with broadband, devices, and training as the three legs that are necessary to encourage meaningful engagement for older adults. Please contact [James Fuccione](#), Senior Director of the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative, for additional information or assistance.



2018 MASSACHUSETTS HEALTHY AGING COMMUNITY PROFILE

Brockton (Plymouth)

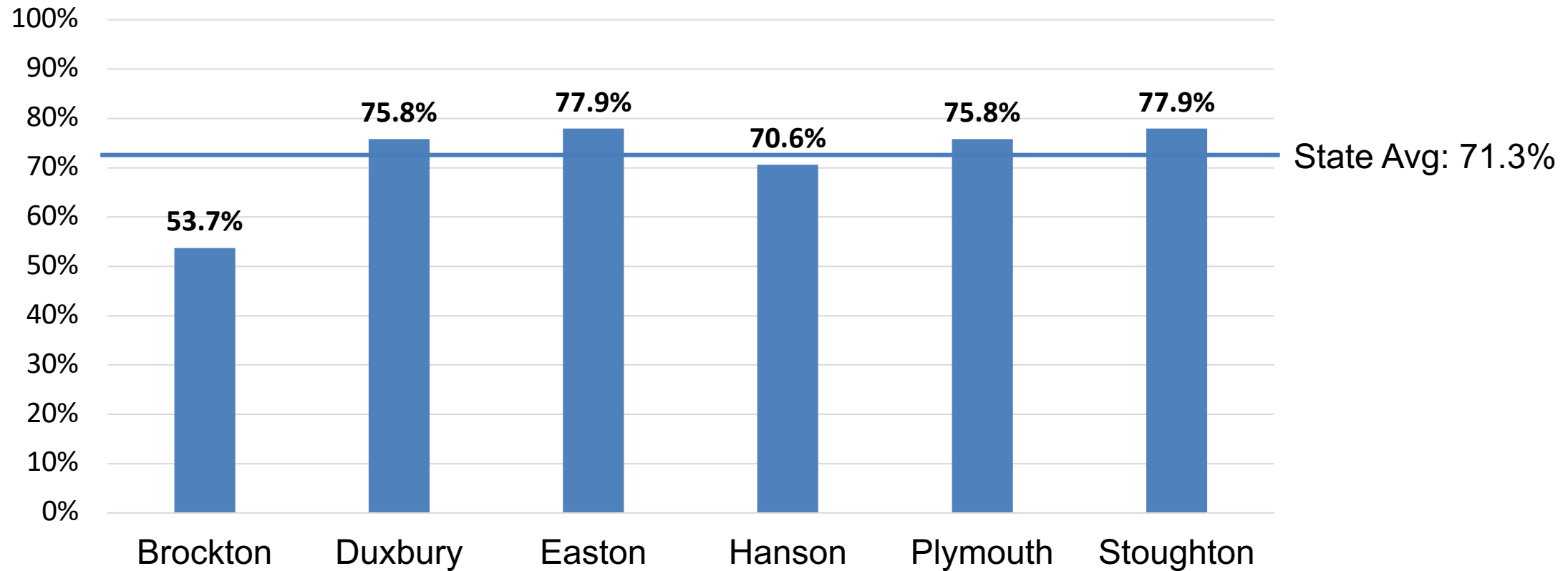
Brockton is a Gateway City south of Boston with 12,317 residents aged 65 or older. The transit score suggests that there is good transit (6/10). Compared to state averages, older residents have lower rates of arthritis, osteoporosis, women with breast cancer, prostate cancer, osteoporosis, benign prostatic hyperplasia, hypothyroidism, cataract, and hearing impairment. However, they are less likely to meet CDC guidelines for physical activity or get a shingles vaccine. They also have higher rates of tooth loss, obesity, depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, PTSD, substance/tobacco use disorders, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, stroke, COPD, asthma, hypertension, heart attack, congestive heart failure, anemia, chronic kidney disease, liver diseases, migraines, epilepsy, glaucoma, and visual/mobility impairments. They are less likely to eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables. Community resources include a Council on Aging walking club, Parks and Recreation department, a memory café, and a YMCA.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS	BETTER / WORSE STATE RATE ¹	COMMUNITY ESTIMATE	STATE ESTIMATE
Total population all ages		94,813	6,742,143
Population 60 years or older as % of total population		18.6%	21.2%
Total population 60 years or older		17,637	1,428,144
Population 65 years or older as % of total population		13.0%	15.1%

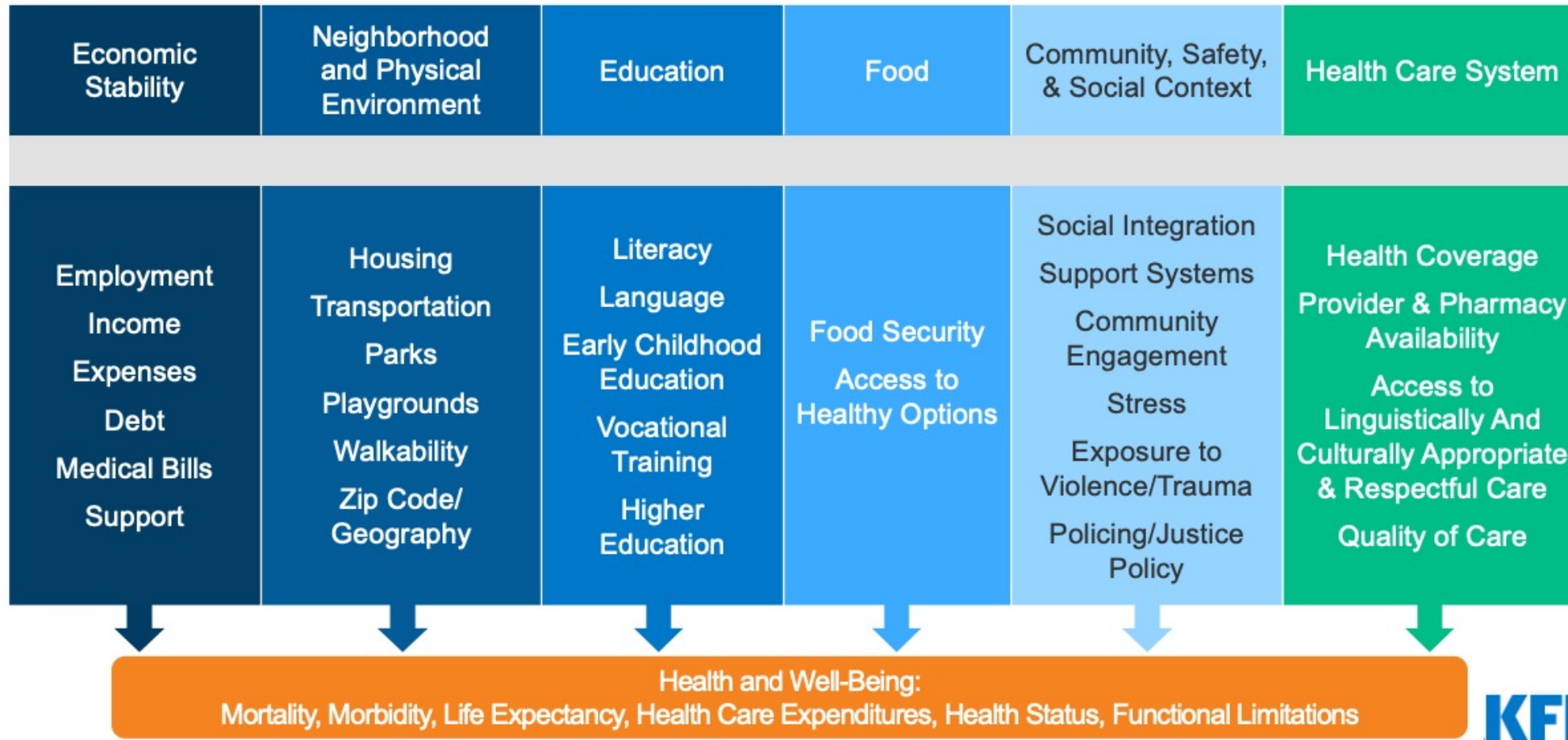
# of YMCAs		5	83
% in county with access to broadband (all ages)		98.0%	97.0%
% 60+ who used Internet in last month	*	53.7%	71.3%
Voter participation rate in 2016 presidential election (age 18+)		64.1%	71.3%

SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION

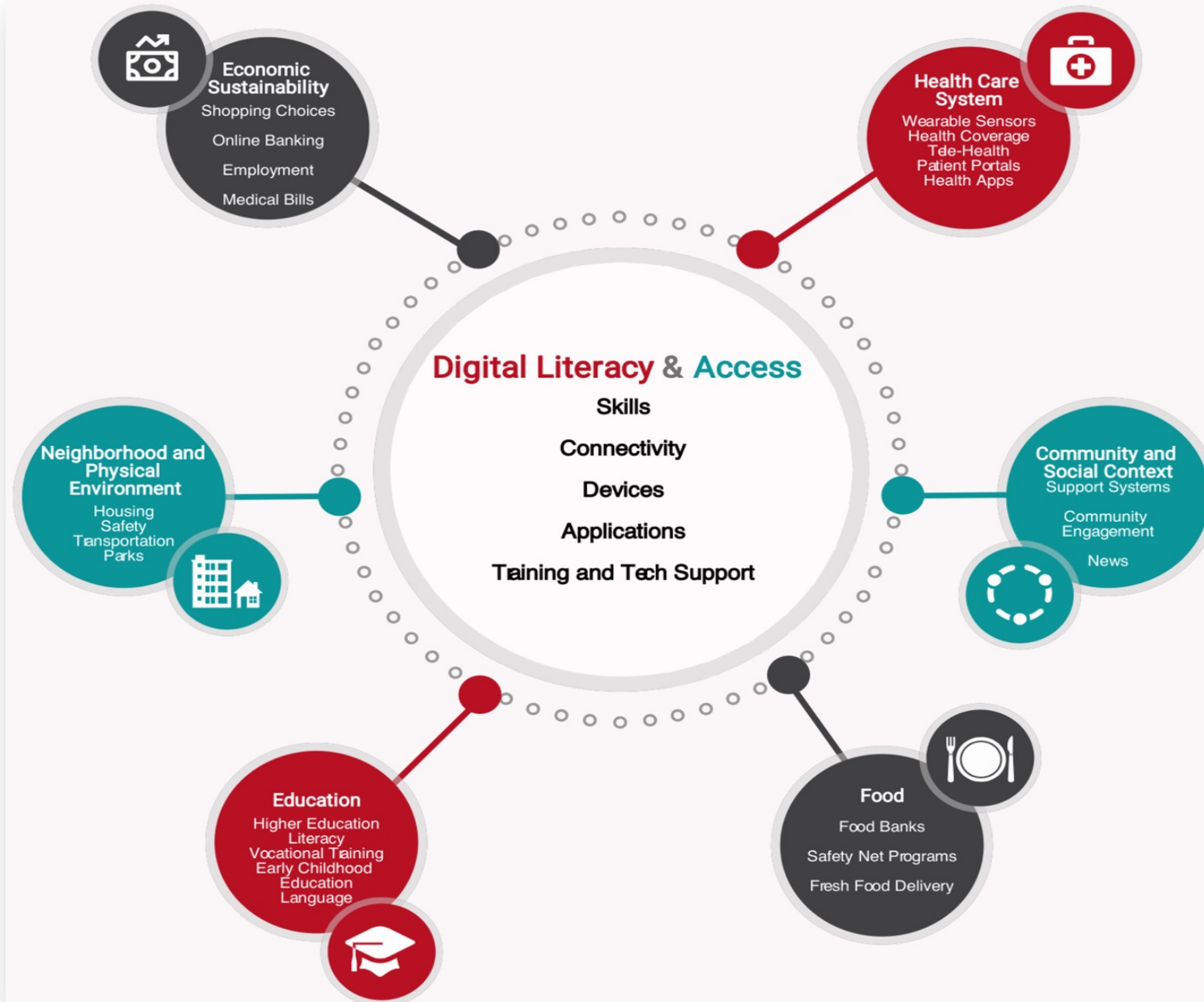
% of older adults (age 60+) who used internet in past month



Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health





- Older adults **disproportionately impacted** by pandemic include those with limited access/proficiency with technology.
- Communities focused their initial efforts on meeting **basic needs** (food, medicine, personal care, and healthcare and home-based services) among the older adults.
 - Then communities **shifted their focus** to social connection, stable housing, mobility, and other conditions that affect wellbeing and the ability to navigate daily life.
 - **Technology was a critical part** of all these responses.
- Older adults and their families who had **access** to technology were able to seek out a wider array of information, services, and social connections **more quickly**, and organizations were able to reach them **more effectively**. A lack of technology was a **significant barrier**.

https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20.10.27-How-Innovative-Community-Responses-to-COVID-19-Support-Healthy-Aging_FINAL.pdf

The Digital Divide and Challenges to Digital Equity

IN HAMPDEN,
HAMPSHIRE, AND
FRANKLIN COUNTIES,
MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 2021

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION for the **Blind and Visually Impaired**



“ With technology, I am not afraid to be alone because I have access to the outside world ”

“ [Participant] used to have a working tablet before, but it broke and didn't have the finances to replace it so he went without. When he got his tablet from us he was so excited because he wanted to reconnect with his family again besides just talking on the phone. He wanted to see them but because they don't live close and, during the pandemic, he hasn't been able to see his grandchildren. He utilized the tablet by connecting with his grandchildren on zoom. He said this tablet is the best thing that's happened to him in a while, he doesn't have to feel alone anymore. ”

Downtown Pittsfield steps into the digital age with \$100K grant for public Wi-Fi network



- MHAC connected communities with funding opportunities that led to a [downtown Wi-Fi network](#) in Pittsfield and a program offering loaned devices and tech education in Ludlow

- Any approach to addressing digital equity should not only consider older adults, but **all sectors** of a community.
 - Older adults live in a variety of residential settings and many live in an **intergenerational household**. Many still are responsible for raising grandchildren or care for their adult children.
 - Skill-building policies and programs can be **flexible** and **use existing community assets**.
 - Include education and awareness of **fraud and scams**.
 - Many older adults are **proficient users** of technology and can serve as a **resource** to their peers. We should be recognizing the potential contributions everyone can make to address the digital divide.
- *Support partnerships and collaboration between councils on aging, libraries, schools, housing, local government, healthcare, faith communities and community-based orgs to address awareness, broadband access, device access, and literacy.*

Contact:

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Our Supporters:



Massachusetts
Councils On Aging



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