

Field Notes on Digital Inclusion | Part 3 | When Infrastructure Meets Imagination

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Video Link: <https://youtu.be/GD0PuNv1-Uk>

This morning, I spoke to the Illinois Broadband Advisory Council about the intersections, the places where digital equity truly lives, even when policy forgets to look there.

I reminded us that broadband is the infrastructure, and digital equity is the human infrastructure. As the meeting ended, I kept thinking about what could happen when those two infrastructures meet.

What if every investment in connection was also an investment in creativity? What if each fiber line we laid carried not only data, but dreams?

Reimagining the Work

Imagine this: As broadband expands across a neighborhood, a community design lab grows alongside it, hosted by the library, a school, or a local cultural center.

Residents gather to map what connection means to them. Young people document the installation process, interview technicians, and create digital stories about their neighborhood's transformation. Artists project community-designed visuals on construction fencing, celebrating not just what is being built, but who it is being built for. Neighbors co-create digital archives and neighborhood apps that highlight cultural landmarks, local businesses, and everyday creativity.

That is what happens when infrastructure meets imagination. Broadband becomes not only a system to access, but a story to inhabit.

What This Intersection Makes Possible

When infrastructure meets imagination, people stop being subjects of progress and start becoming authors of it.

The process of connection becomes a form of creation. It produces both networks and narratives. Jobs emerge not only in construction, but in creativity. Digital storytelling, design, and documentation become part of the buildout itself.

The result is not just access. It is ownership. Not just service, but story. Not just infrastructure, but identity.

A Shared Possibility

That is the intersection I want us to keep building toward, the one where technical infrastructure meets human imagination. Where connection is measured not just by speed, but by shared meaning. Where every broadband investment leaves behind more than a network. It leaves behind capacity, confidence, and community.

If we start from that vision, the digital divide will not just shrink. It will shift. From a symbol of separation into a canvas for collaboration. From a problem to solve into a story we write together.

Kyla Williams Tate - ***Thought Leader, Advocate, and Storyteller***