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COVID-19 and the Digital Divide: Implications for Policy and Equity

As many aspects of daily life transitioned online at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of disparities in broadband access became stark, with many American families facing barriers to school, work, and healthcare. With federal recovery funds reaching towns, tribal nations, cities, and states, decision makers are looking for ways to ensure affordable and equitable access to broadband as a means of addressing these disparities.

Join the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine for a webinar on the consequences of COVID-19 for the digital divide and broadband access, with a focus on uneven access in terms of infrastructure, connectivity, and affordability across the country. The webinar will feature a discussion of investment strategies and policy implications for a pandemic recovery that can contribute to more equitable broadband access while laying the groundwork for broad improvements to broadband access in the long term.

Webinar Agenda

March 3, 2022

2:00 pm – 3:30 pm ET

2:00 pm – 2:04 pm Welcome and Framing

Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, Brandeis University
SEAN Executive Committee Member

2:04 pm – 2:30 pm Part 1: Stage Setting

Anna Read, The Pew Charitable Trusts
Josh Goodman, Boston University
Catherine Tucker, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

2:30 pm – 2:50 pm Part 2: Recovery Funding – Decision Making at State and Local Levels

Rebecca Kauma, Economic and Digital Inclusion Officer, Long Beach, CA
Veneeth Iyengar, Louisiana State Director for Broadband Development and Connectivity
Paul Sachs, Director of Strategic Impact, Ottawa County, MI

2:50 pm – 3:25 pm Part 3: Integrated Discussion

Moderated by Dolores Acevedo-Garcia

Anna Read, The Pew Charitable Trusts
Josh Goodman, Boston University
Catherine Tucker, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Veneeth Iyengar, Louisiana State Director for Broadband Development and Connectivity
Paul Sachs, Director of Strategic Impact, Ottawa County, MI

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3:25 pm – 3:30 pm Closing Remarks
Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, Brandeis University
SEAN Executive Committee Member

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PANELIST BIOS

Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, Ph.D., MPA-URP is the Samuel F. and Rose B. Gingold Professor of Human Development and Social Policy, and Director of the Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. Her research focuses on the social determinants of racial/ethnic inequities in health; the role of social policies in reducing those inequities; and the health and wellbeing of children with special needs. She is Project Director for diversitydatakids.org, a comprehensive research program and indicator database on child wellbeing and opportunity by race/ethnicity across multiple sectors (e.g., education, health, neighborhoods) and geographies, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Dr. Acevedo-Garcia is an investigator and member of the Steering Committee on the Housing and Children's Healthy Development Study funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the MacArthur Foundation. She was a member of the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on How Housing Matters for Families and Children (2009-2014). Her professional activities include invited presentations at the White House Open Opportunity Project (2016), the National Conference on Housing Mobility (2015, 2012, 2010), the HUD/MacArthur Foundation "How Housing Matters" Conference (2011, 2012), and the White House conference on the Future of Rental Housing Policy (2010). She served on two national expert panels convened by the Centers for Disease Control (Housing and Health, and Social Determinants of Health), and on the expert panel for the award-winning PBS documentary series "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making us Sick?" She is a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Health and Social Behavior, Social Problems, and Cityscape. Dr. Acevedo-Garcia received her B.A. in public administration from El Colegio de Mexico (Mexico City), and her MPA-URP and Ph.D. in Public Policy with a concentration in Demography from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

Josh Goodman is an Associate Professor of Education and Economics at Boston University, where he works as an applied microeconomist on labor economics and education policy. His research focuses on quasi-experimental estimation of the impacts of educational interventions. His overarching goal is to provide rigorous quantitative evidence that illuminates how schools and labor markets work, particularly with respect to postsecondary and STEM education. His work has been published in peer-reviewed outlets such as the Quarterly Journal of Economics, AER: Insights, AEJ: Applied Economics, AEJ: Economic Policy and the Journal of Labor Economics. It has been cited in multiple White House reports and featured by the New York Times, the Washington Post, and National Public Radio. He serves as co-editor of the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (JPAM) and is a research fellow of NBER and CESifo. Much of his policy-related work is done as a faculty affiliate of the BU Wheelock Education Policy Center (WEPC).

Prior to joining BU, he was Associate Professor of Economics at Brandeis University and before that on the faculty of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He has a B.A. in physics from Harvard, an M.Phil. in education from Cambridge University, and a Ph.D. in economics from

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Columbia University. Prior to starting his Ph.D., he was a public high school math teacher in Watertown, MA.

Rebecca F. Kauma is a passionate diversity, racial equity, and inclusion (DEI) leader with proven program and project management, community engagement, strategic planning, and operations expertise. Rebecca is currently the Economic & Digital Inclusion Officer at The City of Long Beach. In this role, she is leading the City's Economic and Digital Inclusion Initiatives to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color in Long Beach have the opportunities, resources, and power they need to thrive economically. Rebecca strives to uplift and empower communities most in need through equitable, inclusive and culturally competent programs, practices, policies, and systems change efforts.

Rebecca is the recipient of the 2020 Charles Benton Digital Equity Champion Award. This national award recognizes outstanding leadership and dedication in advancing digital equity and inclusion and addressing the digital divide. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA). Rebecca was selected as a 2020 New Leaders Council Fellow. The New Leaders Council Institute is a highly selective national leadership program to equip young progressive leaders with the skills to enact policy and systems change efforts in their communities.

Rebecca has a Master's Degree in Public Administration (MPA) with an emphasis on Healthcare Policy from The American University School of Public Affairs. She received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Administration (BSHA) from California State University, Northridge.

Anna Read leads Pew's efforts to examine how states and the federal government are working to connect millions of Americans to affordable, high-speed, reliable internet as part of the Trusts' broadband access initiative. Her work focuses on research that will help legislators and other policymakers expand connectivity and close the digital divide.

Before joining Pew, Read was a senior research associate at the American Planning Association. She also worked as a project manager on regional broadband planning efforts for Missouri's Office of Administration and for the International City/County Management Association, where her work focused on smart growth and rural communities.

Read holds a bachelor of arts degree from Bryn Mawr College and a master's degree in regional planning from Cornell University.

Paul Sachs is Director of Strategic Impact for Ottawa County MI, where he implements innovative and pragmatic solutions for growing array of interconnected services and strategies that positively impact quality of life and economic growth in the County. A Michigan native, Paul was born and raised in Royal Oak; attended Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo (B.S. Earth Sciences '98); and currently lives in Holland with his wife and two daughters. Paul previously worked as a Researcher for the Federal Highway Administration's Research and

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Technology Center in McLean, Virginia; and as a Planning Analyst for Michael Baker Engineering under contract with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in Washington D.C.

Catherine Tucker is the Sloan Distinguished Professor of Management and a Professor of Marketing at MIT Sloan. She is also Chair of the MIT Sloan PhD Program. Her research interests lie in how technology allows firms to use digital data and machine learning to improve performance, and in the challenges this poses for regulation. Tucker has particular expertise in online advertising, digital health, social media, and electronic privacy. Her research studies the interface between marketing, the economics of technology, and law.

She has received an NSF CAREER Award for her work on digital privacy, the Erin Anderson Award for an Emerging Female Marketing Scholar and Mentor, the Garfield Economic Impact Award for her work on electronic medical records, the Paul E. Green Award for contributions to the practice of Marketing Research, the William F. O'Dell Award for most significant, long-term contribution to Marketing, and the INFORMS Society for Marketing Science Long Term Impact Award for long-run impact on marketing.

She is a cofounder of the MIT Cryptoeconomics Lab which studies the applications of blockchain and also a co-organizer of the Economics of Artificial Intelligence initiative sponsored by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. She has been a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. She has testified to Congress regarding her work on digital privacy and algorithms, and presented her research to the OECD and the ECJ.

Tucker is coeditor at Quantitative Marketing and Economics, associate editor at Management Science, Marketing Science, and the Journal of Marketing Research and a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research. She teaches MIT Sloan's course on Pricing and the EMBA course "Marketing Management for the Senior Executive." She has received the Jamieson Prize for Excellence in Teaching as well as being voted "Teacher of the Year" at MIT Sloan. She holds a PhD in economics from Stanford University and a BA from the University of Oxford.

Veneeth Iyengar is the executive director of Louisiana's Office of Broadband Development & Connectivity. He is responsible for coordinating efforts among federal, state and local leaders to eliminate the digital divide in Louisiana by 2029. Previously, he was an Assistant Chief Administrative Officer for East Baton Rouge Parish Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome. During his time, the parish saw the best year in history for economic development projects. His role included outreach to executives from leading tech, pharmaceutical and healthcare companies throughout the country and involvement in economic development deals--including the recent Amazon acquisition of Cortana Mall and the redevelopment of a 76,000 square-foot hospital building.

Veneeth was asked by Gov. John Bel Edwards to co-chair his Resilient Louisiana Healthcare Task Force, which included the CEOs of Ochsner, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana and Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System. The task force recommended approaches to create an

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innovative healthcare economy given the challenges posed by the pandemic. Previous to his time as a public servant, Veneeth helped build the Venture Capital/Private Equity healthcare practice for Sage Growth Partners and worked in the Office of the Honorable Robert Mosbacher Jr., former CEO of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation under President George W. Bush.

He received his Master of Science in finance from Johns Hopkins University and his Bachelor of Science in economics from Purdue University. Veneeth grew up in Baton Rouge and attended Baton Rouge High School.