

New York State
Library



2022 Digital Inclusion Toolkit



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Intro from NY State Librarian

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began to draw increased attention to the persistent crisis of the digital divide, the New York State Library has expanded its efforts to help libraries meet these new and increasing challenges in their communities. This Toolkit, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), was developed with that goal in mind. Closing digital equity gaps in New York State will require the coordination, cooperation, and intentional capacity building of the many organizations working to support digital inclusion.

Across the state, libraries are leading efforts to ensure that all New Yorkers have:

- Affordable, robust home internet access and appropriate internet-enabled devices that meet their specific needs
- Digital fluency skills to support safe, effective internet use and trustworthy, sustained technical support to foster confidence and growth
- Applications and online content that enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration

The State Library intends the Digital Inclusion Toolkit to help libraries communicate the value of their existing digital equity services, such as formal computer classes, reliable technology assistance, and free Wi-Fi access for the [26 percent of New Yorkers who lack wireline broadband access](#)¹. The State Library hopes that these tools will inspire and enable libraries to build on this foundation and lead to larger scale digital equity work, such as:

- Meeting individual needs while identifying and developing solutions to digital inequity at a societal level
- Building, maintaining, and supporting digital equity ecosystems across community sectors
- Developing and employing digital inclusion strategies that address the intersecting conditions contributing to digital inequity

Lauren Moore
Assistant Commissioner for Libraries
and State Librarian

About This Toolkit

The New York State Library Digital Inclusion Toolkit, created in partnership with National Digital Inclusion Alliance, is intended to guide libraries seeking to increase access and adoption of technology in communities through digital skills training programs, access to public and home broadband, appropriate devices, technical support, and digital navigation services. These efforts may occur within the library, remotely through a partner organization, or in the learner's home. The goal is to advance digital access, literacy, and adoption among community members, through innovative, creative solutions that build upon trust and confidence in libraries as the provider of these services.

Public and nonprofit leaders have created practical, hands-on digital inclusion programs in communities throughout the US, such as digital skills training centers, public computer labs, nonprofit computer refurbishing, community wireless broadband, and more. Some of these programs have served their neighbors since the 1990s, while others have just started recently.

This toolkit shares strategies, tools, and recommendations from digital inclusion programs at public libraries and community-based organizations across New York State and throughout the US.

What Are “Digital Inclusion Services?”

Digital inclusion services are the programs, actions, and services developed and sustained to assist community members in gaining access to appropriate devices, sustainable broadband, digital skill building and developing long-term digital skills. While this may sound rather advanced, every library has been a hub of digital inclusion since the early 1990s when libraries began to offer the first public computers and internet access.

Digital inclusion is rooted in trust between the service providers - in this case libraries - and the community. Libraries have long been the equalizer in communities, and digital inclusion has always been a part of this work. Many resources and recommendations in this toolkit can be scaled to the size of your community or to support current levels of digital inclusion services and develop robust future offerings.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is broken up into different categories addressing major barriers to digital inclusion, with recommended knowledge creation tools throughout. Chapters addressing digital skills and literacy include “Auditing Your Current Digital Skills Offerings,” “Digital Navigators,” and “Planning Your Digital Skills Training Strategy.” Areas covering access to devices and internet are covered in “Access to Internet Capable Devices,” and “Access to Broadband,” as well as sections of “Defining Your Community’s Needs.”

Our recommendations for data collection, planning, and dissemination, as well as future steps for digital inclusion can be found in “Defining Your Community’s Needs,” “Increasing Impact,” and additional resources. While we do include stories and anecdotes from the field about excellence in digital inclusion, these are not exhaustive examples. We look forward to seeing how you increase equitable access to and use of technology in your community!

These sections are also not prescriptive, nor is there an order they should be followed in. Instead, we welcome you to find what applies to you, and share what may work for your colleagues.

Shared Vocabulary

In the world of digital inclusion, conflicting definitions can lead to confusing communication.

In collaboration with the digital inclusion community, NDIA has developed a shared understanding of specific terms to ensure streamlined communication.

Unless noted, these definitions were created in collaboration with the NDIA community of 600+ affiliates, which includes local digital inclusion practitioners and experts from across the country representing a variety of organizations, including libraries.

Broadband Adoption ²

Broadband adoption has traditionally been defined as residential subscribership to high-speed internet access. But for those in the field working to increase the digital capacity of communities, broadband adoption is daily access to the internet:

- At speeds, quality, and capacity necessary to accomplish common tasks
- With the digital skills necessary to participate online
- On a personal device and secure convenient network

Digital Inclusion Ecosystem

A digital inclusion ecosystem is a combination of programs and policies that meet a geographic community's unique and diverse needs. Coordinating entities work together in an ecosystem to address all aspects of the digital divide, including affordable broadband, devices, and skills.

Community-Wide Placed-Based Digital Inclusion Coalition

A collective of organizations shaped by the community to advocate for digital equity and foster the growth of the community's digital inclusion ecosystem through a formalized structure that publicly functions to facilitate the collaboration and coordination between community organizations that aim to support digital inclusion services.

Broadband Equity

A collective of organizations shaped by the community to advocate for digital equity and foster the growth of the community's digital inclusion ecosystem through a formalized structure that publicly functions to facilitate the collaboration and coordination between community organizations that aim to support digital inclusion services.

Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This includes five elements:

- Affordable, robust broadband internet service
- Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user
- Access to digital skills training
- Quality technical support
- Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration

The elements of digital inclusion must evolve as technology advances. Digital inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional, and structural barriers to access and use technology.

Digital Equity

A condition where all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

Digital Divide

The gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not. As technology constantly evolves, the digital divide prevents equal participation and opportunity in all parts of life, disproportionately affecting people of color, Indigenous peoples, households with low incomes, people with disabilities, and older adults.

Digital Literacy

NDIA recommends the American Library Association’s definition of “digital literacy” via their Digital Literacy Taskforce: Digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

Digital Navigators

Digital navigators are trusted guides who assist community members in internet adoption and the use of computing devices. Digital navigation services include ongoing assistance with affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, and application support.

Terms Used in Your Community

Regional dialects are part of what makes New York an interesting and unique place. Many community members may use different terms based on regional influences (for example, does anyone have a library where people ask for the bubbler rather than the water fountain?). Take some time with a team at your library or in your region to determine what regional terms may be used for technology. Chart them below, and consider whether to integrate them into your instruction.

REGIONAL TERM	WIDELY USED TERM	DOES THIS IMPACT COMMUNICATION?	HOW WILL WE ACKNOWLEDGE THIS?
PRINT COPIES	Print from the computer, print, print a page	Yes, we can’t tell if they need the copy machine or to login to a computer	We can gently correct community members, and help them learn about copies (1 or more prints of the same item) versus printing a page.

Auditing Your Current Digital Inclusion Offerings

Your library is already providing digital inclusion services. Whether they are formal classes, one-on-one librarian appointments, outreach or community lead, take a moment to record your current offerings. Inventorying and tracking your own and others' services is a form of asset mapping.

Use the tool below to determine any gaps in service or communities served. Use the chart below to get started, following the example on the top line. This chart may also guide you as you read through the toolkit and begin to learn more and build upon your knowledge of digital inclusion. The goal of this is to not only acknowledge previous work, but to identify areas of digital inclusion that are going unaddressed in your community.

PROGRAM / SERVICE	LOCATIONS SERVED	WHAT ELEMENTS OF DIGITAL INCLUSION ARE BEING ADDRESSED? BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE.
SENIOR CENTER TECH CLASSES	East Lake Senior Center / West Lake Senior Center	Instructor Led Classes / Loaner Devices Loaner Hotspots

Auditing Staff Skills

In addition to auditing your current offerings, auditing the skill sets of staff may assist in the development and rollout of digital inclusion programming. Digital inclusion begins where we are, which may be first developing staff skills, and then looking outwards into the community.

The [Tech Skills Checklist for Public Library Supervisors and Staff](#)³, developed by DigitalLearn.org, can assist in determining the level of support staff required during or prior to changes in digital inclusion services.

Quick Links to Resources

[Tech Skills Checklist for Public Library Supervisors and Staff](#)



Defining Your Community's Needs

Learning more about our community is an ongoing process, as the needs and desires of community members may change, based on their own needs, and external factors.

Once you have collected this information, you can rely on the data to guide programs, inform digital equity plans, and contribute to grants and other library funding opportunities.

The following four steps address research using data sources such as the US Census, community assessments utilizing observations of community need by library staff and trusted community leaders, surveys that engage community members directly, and methods for examining and sharing the information you have gathered.

Step 1: Learning About Your Community's Digital Exclusion: Research

There is an overwhelming amount of data available about your community, but finding data specific to questions on digital needs can be more difficult. Using the recommended data sets, portals, and maps, you can learn more about your community's digital access. If you aren't sure how to frame the data you are discovering, utilize [The Digital Divide Worksheet](#) data tool (on page 18) the Arizona State Library and NDIA created to help create a snapshot of a region.

Public Statistics: The New York State Digital Equity Portal ⁴

The [New York State Digital Equity Portal](#) does much of the work of exploring digital equity needs and gaps for you. The portal pulls data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and the FCC's Form 477 Fixed Broadband Deployment Data (both described in detail below), breaking it down by political district and ZIP code so you can get very granular level data based on race, ethnicity, and other socioeconomic characteristics.

Public Statistics: Census Data

To get an overall picture of the numbers, demographic characteristics, and geographic distribution of your community members who have little or no internet access, the [American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#) provides household computer and internet data for individual census tracts.

The ACS includes detailed computer and internet data in Tables B28002 through B28011, as well as high-level summary data in Tables S2801 and S2802. Topics covered include:

- The share of households with various types of home internet access (dial-up, wireline, cellphone, satellite, etc.) or no access at all (B20002) ⁵
- Overall computer ownership and internet subscriptions
- By households at various income levels (B28004)
 - By "persons in households" of various...
 - Ages (B28005)
 - Race and ethnic groups (B28009)
 - Educational attainment (B28006)
 - Labor force status (B28007)

[ACS 1-Year Estimates](#)⁴ are available for larger geographies such as states and counties and jurisdictions with populations over 65,000; while 5-Year Estimates are available for counties and jurisdictions with populations under 65,000, as well as census tracts and block groups. While the 5-Year Estimates are available down to the block group level, large margins of error at that level reduce the data's reliability and can present a false sense of precision. For this reason, NDIA uses census tracts as the most granular level of geography for analyzing this data.

Public Statistics: Federal Communications Commission

Roughly twice a year, the FCC, through its Form 477 process, collects and publishes two sets of data from commercial internet providers that could be useful for your community assessment:

The [FCC's Fixed Broadband Deployment Data](#)⁷ includes information about the "fixed broadband" technologies that each provider has deployed in each census block it serves. Data is available for download in the form of a zipped CSV file for each state and is also shared via a set of interactive maps.⁸ These maps are not entirely reliable, as there have been noted discrepancies in data coverage and speed of service.

The [Residential Fixed Internet Access Connections Data](#)⁹ provides data on the shares of households in all census tracts that have fixed broadband service (i.e. wireline or satellite, but not mobile) from the reporting internet service providers. This data comes from the providers' actual counts of customers in each tract who meet one of two download speed benchmarks (10 Mbps and 200 Kbps). The FCC publishes a map that summarizes the number of households per 1,000 that have service at each of the two benchmark speeds in each tract¹⁰.

[National Telecommunications and Information Administration \(NTIA\)](#) created and maintains a [National Broadband Availability Map](#)¹¹ that incorporates data from the American Community Survey on the general availability of broadband, as well as data on usage of broadband and upload/download speeds. This data is represented down to the census tract, allowing for a laser focus for a specific region.

A Data Snapshot of New York

The 2021 publication, [**Achieving Digital Equity in New York: an Outline for Collaborative Change**](#)¹², by Lauren Moore, assistant commissioner for libraries and state librarian, provides an excellent example of using data from ACS and other studies to create a data snapshot of the state.

Two crucial pieces of data include, “Nearly 27% of New York households do not subscribe to wireline broadband service at home. Some 22% of New York households do not have a desktop or laptop computer at home.”

This publication also includes a report created by [**John Horrigan, PhD**](#), breaking down data on connectivity and access in New York’s library districts statewide. This report, [**“New York’s Digital Divide: Examining adoption of internet and computers for the state and its library districts,”**](#)¹³ will provide specific details on your region.

Access to broadband and challenges community members face have been represented with comprehensive data within a report released by the Comptroller of New York, Thomas DiNapoli, entitled [**“Availability, Access and Affordability: Understanding Broadband Challenges in New York State.”**](#)

¹⁴ This report also details future planning for statewide broadband strategy that can help to inform digital inclusion development in your areas.

In addition to the state-focused resources above, [**Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation \(Rural LISC\)**](#), developed a map that shares data and details on zip code level for the Emergency Broadband Benefit, a pre-Affordable Connectivity Program federal interest subsidy. The map tool, [**Emergency Broadband Benefit Snapshot**](#)¹⁵, includes the eligibility rates as well as adoption rates to display opportunities for promoting affordable broadband options, as well as a level of awareness of who has adopted previous programs.

What Does the Digital Divide Look Like in Your Area?

Gathering data on computer and internet use in your area

Complete the following chart for your county. Use census tables, NYS Digital Equity Portal, as well as the reports shared on pages 8-10 to find this information.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018
American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

	STATE	_____ COUNTY
HOUSEHOLDS WITH A COMPUTER		_____ %
...WITH A DESKTOP OR LAPTOP		_____ %
...WITH A SMARTPHONE		_____ %
...WITH A TABLET OR PORTABLE WIRELESS COMPUTER		_____ %
...WITH OTHER		_____ %
HOUSEHOLDS WITH A BROADBAND INTERNET SUBSCRIPTION		_____ %
...CELLULAR DATA PLAN		_____ %
...BROADBAND SUCH AS CABLE, FIBER OPTIC, OR DSL		_____ %
SATELLITE		_____ %
...DIAL-UP ALONE		_____ %
...OTHER SERVICE ALONE		_____ %

Gather Data on Internet Service Providers (ISP) in Your Area

Internet speeds vary widely throughout states and regions. To see how your area compares, go to BroadbandNow at broadbandnow.com and enter your zip code.

Then complete the following:

There are _____ residential internet providers. The fastest speed available is _____ Mbps

There are _____ mobile internet providers. The fastest speed available is _____ Mbps

The average download speed in my area is _____ Mbps

The lowest price is \$ _____ /month for service at _____ Mbps from _____ (ISP)

The highest price is \$ _____ /month for service at _____ Mbps from _____ (ISP)

If your area is covered by one of the providers listed below, individuals may be eligible for discounted service if they meet certain age or income criteria. Discount prices are not listed on BroadbandNow.

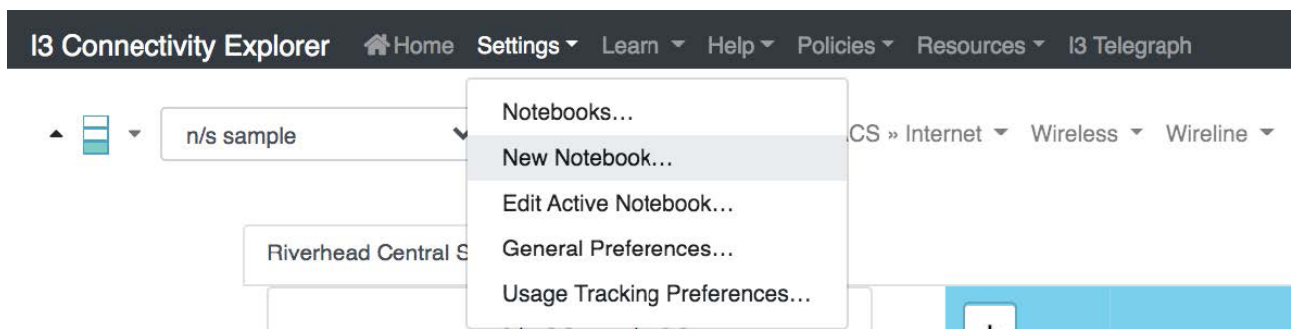
Discount internet and technology for individuals in New York:

PROVIDER	PROGRAM	WEBSITE NAME	INTERNET	DEVICES

Community Profile Builder:

Connectivity Tool¹⁶ This robust tool pulls from a number of different datasets (demographics, speed tests, provider data, adoption and use, and anchor institutions), and builds in visualizations for you. You'll need to create an account, which usually gets approved within a matter of hours. Work at the county-level or smaller.

1. Create a "New Notebook" from the Settings tab in the dropdown menu.



2. Name and Describe your Notebook, then click "Create."

Create a New Notebook

* indicates a required field.

Title*

Description

Community Profile Builder:

- Next, click “Add a Locality.” On the next page, you’re prompted to select your research area. Select your state in the first dropdown menu, then specify your geography in the next dropdown menu. These geographies are census designations, so it’s OK if it feels unintuitive at first. If looking for information about a specific city, we recommend selecting “Unified School District” as your geography.

In the open field below, type in the exact name or “string” that you’d like to find, then click “Search.”

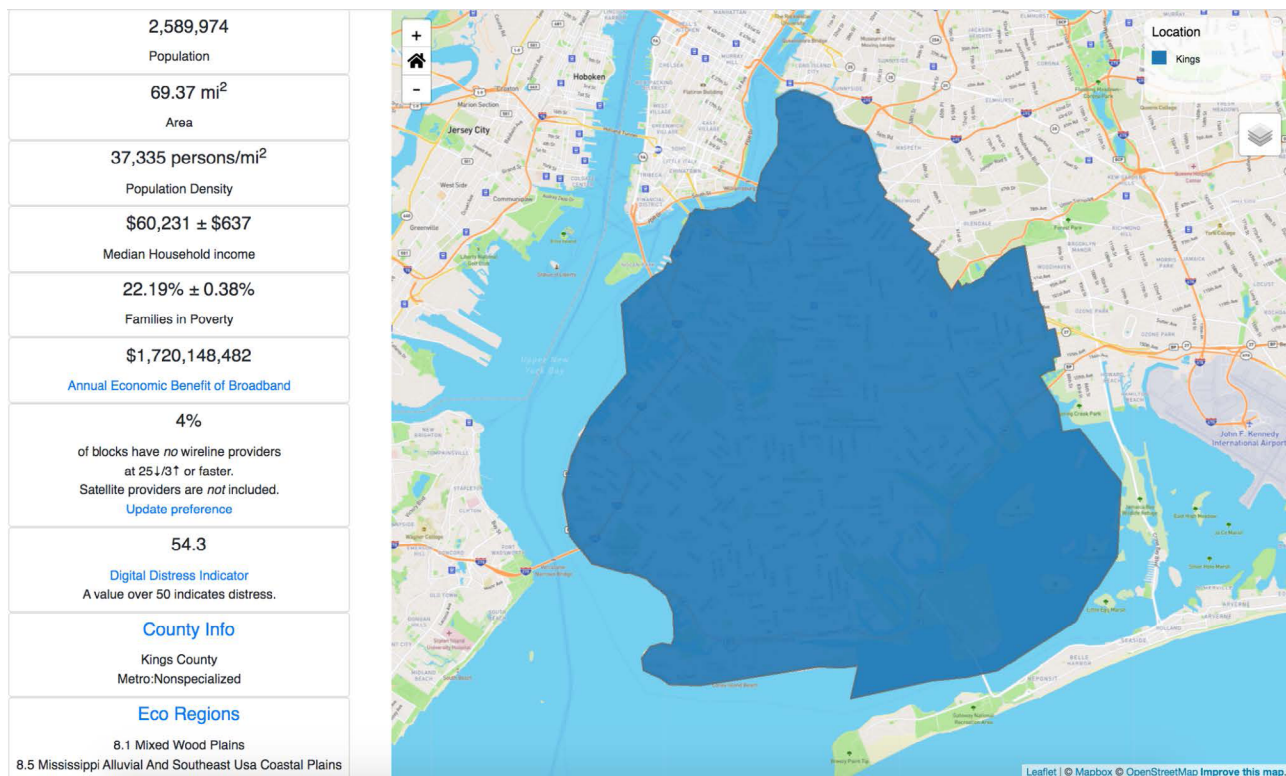
New Locality

In find

Search string

- State
- ✓ County
- County Subdivision
- Place
- Tribal Lands
- Unified School District
- Secondary School District
- Elementary School District
- Congressional District
- Upper Chamber
- Lower Chamber

4. The next page provides some specifications for your research. These numbers are pulled from industry standards, such as the 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. Because these are field standards we do not recommend changing any of the designations. At the bottom of the page, click “Activate Notebook” and give the tool a few moments to generate your dashboard.
5. The information on the dashboard is pulled from a variety of open data sources, but most significantly from the American Community Survey. This dashboard also creates an interactive map.

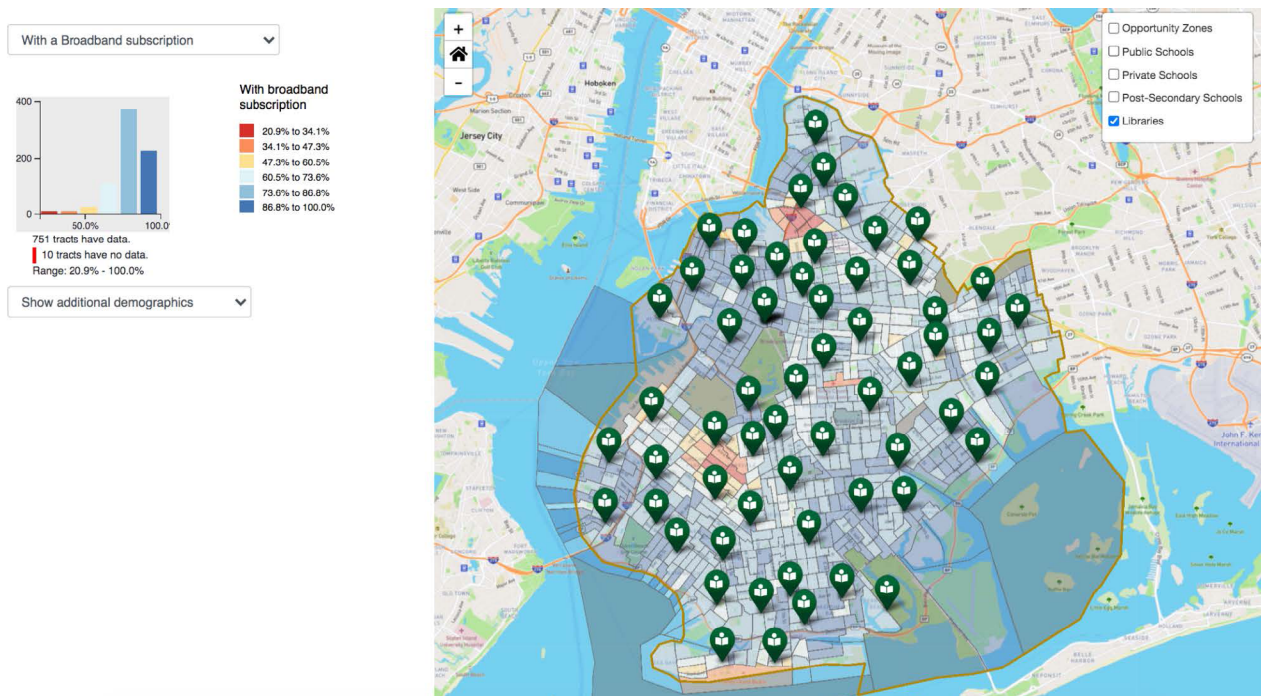


6. Right now, our map looks like a blue blob, but you can select options from the dropdown menus above to change the way we interpret information. For instance, selecting ACS Internet > Subscription Rates: Details provides a more granular view of the research area. In this case, the map is broken into census tracts that are color coded to show neighborhood that have lower rates of broadband subscriptions.

TIP 1: In the bar graph to the left, you can click on each color range to highlight those specific tracts on the map.

TIP 2: Selecting the dropdown menu for “Show additional demographics” gives you the opportunity to compare information about the digital divide—broadband subscription rates, device ownership—with other measures of community health such as poverty, race, income, and more.

TIP 3: You can toggle different layers using the icon at the top-right corner of the map. The image below overlays public library locations with the map of broadband subscription rates in Brooklyn.



7. There's so much more to explore like speed test data and internet service provider service area. Use the dropdown menus to learn more about your research area!

Make a Community Profile Map

Census Data: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

1. Enter "internet" in the search bar.



United States
Census
BUREAU

Tables Maps Pages

Explore Census Data

The Census Bureau is the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy.

internet

- Computer and Internet Use
- Telephone, Computer, and Internet Access
- 5191301: Internet publishing and broadcasting
- 515: Broadcasting (except internet)
- 511: Publishing industries (except internet)

Advanced Search

- In the **Maps** tab, select which data set you'd like to display on your map. (Tip: It's useful to start with Table B2801 "Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions"). Click on **Filter** and then click through to select which geographies you'd like to add. In this example, we'll display all census tracts in New York, and you can select further counties. Once you have your geographies selected, click on **Hide** in the top right corner to back to the map. You might have to zoom out and reposition the map to display the area you have selected.

The screenshot shows the United States Census Bureau website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Computer and Internet Use" and a search icon. Below the search bar are navigation tabs: "All", "Tables", "Maps" (which is highlighted), and "Pages". To the right of these tabs are links for "Microdata", "Help", "FAQ", and "Feedback".

On the left side, there is a "Filters (2)" panel. It includes a "Clear all" button and a search box. Below the search box, there are several filter categories: "Codes", "Geography" (which is selected and highlighted in blue), "Surveys", "Topics", and "Years".

In the center, there is a "State / Select State" panel. It has a dropdown menu for "State / Select State" and two buttons: "Hide Geographics Components" and "Show Geographics Components". Below these buttons is a list of states with checkboxes: "New Mexico", "New York" (checked), "North Carolina", "North Dakota", "Ohio", "Oklahoma", "Oregon", "Pennsylvania", and "Puerto Rico".

On the right side, there is a "4 Results" panel. It shows a "View: 10 | 25 | 50" dropdown and a "Download Table Data" link. Below this, there is a "SELECTION MAP" section. It lists two results: "S2801 | TYPES OF COMPUTERS AND INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS" (which is selected and highlighted in blue) and "B28001 | TYPES OF COMPUTERS IN HOUSEHOLD".

At the bottom of the page, there is a URL: https://data.census.gov/cedsci/map?q=Computer+and+Internet+Use&q=0400000US36&tid=ACSS1192019.S2801&cid=S2801_C01_001H&vintage=2020&layer=VI_2020_040_00_PP_018&mode=thematic&loc=42.7876,-76.8903747021

- By default, the map displays estimated totals households for each tract. To show percentage instead, select from the dropdown menu under **Data Variable**. In this example, we want to display "Percent - TYPE OF INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS - Without an Internet Subscription - Estimate."

The screenshot shows the United States Census Bureau website interface in the map view. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Computer and Internet Use" and a search icon. Below the search bar are navigation tabs: "All", "Tables", "Maps" (which is highlighted), and "Pages". To the right of these tabs are links for "Microdata", "Help", "FAQ", and "Feedback".

On the left side, there is a "Filters (6)" panel. It includes a "Clear Geos" button and a search box. Below the search box, there are several filter categories: "Codes", "Geography", "Surveys", "Topics", and "Years".

In the center, there is a "State / Select State" panel. It has a dropdown menu for "State / Select State" and two buttons: "Hide Geographics Components" and "Show Geographics Components". Below these buttons is a list of states with checkboxes: "New Mexico", "New York" (checked), "North Carolina", "North Dakota", "Ohio", "Oklahoma", "Oregon", "Pennsylvania", and "Puerto Rico".

On the right side, there is a "4 Results" panel. It shows a "View: 10 | 25 | 50" dropdown and a "Download Table Data" link. Below this, there is a "SELECTION MAP" section. It lists two results: "S2801 | TYPES OF COMPUTERS AND INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS" (which is selected and highlighted in blue) and "B28001 | TYPES OF COMPUTERS IN HOUSEHOLD".

At the bottom of the page, there is a URL: https://data.census.gov/cedsci/map?q=Computer+and+Internet+Use&q=0400000US36&tid=ACSS1192019.S2801&cid=S2801_C01_001H&vintage=2020&layer=VI_2020_040_00_PP_018&mode=thematic&loc=42.7876,-76.8903747021

Play around! You can change the colors and the legend by clicking **Customize Map** in the top right corner. You can see and download the data by clicking on **Tables**.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar with the 'United States Census Bureau' logo and a search bar containing 'Computer and Internet Use'. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for 'All', 'Tables', 'Maps', and 'Pages'. The 'Maps' tab is selected. On the left, there are 'Filters (6)' and 'Results (4)'. The main content area displays '4 Results' for the search query. The first result is highlighted: 'S2801 | TYPES OF COMPUTERS AND INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS'. Below this, there are two more results: 'B28001 | TYPES OF COMPUTERS IN HOUSEHOLD' and 'B28003 | PRESENCE OF A COMPUTER AND TYPE OF INTERNET SUBSCRIPTION IN HOUSEHOLD'. On the right side, there is a 'Customize Map' panel with various tool icons like 'Variable(s)', 'Select', 'Clear Geos', 'Layer', 'Year', 'Dataset', 'Basemap', 'Style', 'Colors', 'Classes', 'Identify', and 'More Tools'. Below these icons, there is a list of variable names for selection.

This screenshot shows the same search results, but with the 'Tables' tab selected. The main content area displays the selected variable: 'Percent—Total households—TYPE OF INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS—With an Internet subscription:—Broadband of any type—Cellular data plan—Cellular data plan with no other type of Internet subscription—Estimate in 4 Geos in 2019'. Below the variable name, there is a toolbar with icons for 'Variable(s)', 'Select', 'Clear Geos', 'Layer', 'Year', 'Dataset', 'Basemap', 'Style', 'Colors', 'Classes', 'Identify', 'Table', and 'Notes'. The map area shows a geographical view with a legend in the bottom left corner. The legend is titled 'Percent—Total households—TYPE OF INTERN... in 2019 Geos: 4' and contains three color-coded categories: 7.7%—9.9% (dark blue, count 2), 7.6%—7.6% (medium blue, count 1), and 7.5%—7.5% (light blue, count 1). Below the legend, there are 'Styles' for 'State' and 'Metropolitan/Micropolitan Area'. The map shows several states, with some areas highlighted in blue.

Quick Links to Resources

[Achieving Digital Equity in New York: an Outline for Collaborative Change](#)

[American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#)

[Availability, Access and Affordability: Understanding Broadband Challenges in New York State](#)

[Broadband Now](#)

[Digital Divide Worksheet](#)

[Emergency Broadband Benefit Snapshot](#)

[FCC's Fixed Broadband Deployment Data](#)

[The I3 Connectivity Explorer.](#)

[National Broadband Availability Map](#)

[New York's Digital Divide: Examining adoption of internet and computers for the state and its library districts](#)

[New York State Digital Equity Portal](#)

[The Residential Fixed Internet Access Connections Data](#)

Step 2: Learning About Your Community: Assessment

You can develop a community needs assessment by analyzing publicly available data and by asking for feedback from individuals who live or work in the community. To identify which questions to include in the assessment, consider including members of your library community (community-based organizations, schools, etc.) and people you work with and trust.

An example of questions to be answered with a community assessment, as advised by the North Carolina Division of Broadband and Digital Equity, can be found on [page 29](#).

Home Access Needs Assessment Playbook

Digital Bridge K-12 developed the [Home Access Needs Assessment Playbook](#)¹⁷ to guide the assessment of communities that covers what data to collect, how to collect it, where to store it, and how to visualize it, as well as next steps. While the document is intended for K-12 teachers and the community, it is an excellent guide to assessment and data practices for digital inclusion work.

Listening as Assessment

Reporting can also be represented in a less formal format, such as the [“Bronx Digital Equity Coalition Listening Session Report,”](#)¹⁸ created by NDIA and the Bronx Digital Equity Coalition, with support from [Community Tech NY](#), following listening sessions with local organizations on what was needed to expand and support digital inclusion work in the region.

Quick Links to Resources

[Bronx Digital Equity Coalition Listening Session Report](#)

[Home Access Needs Assessment Playbook](#)

[Sample Assessment Questions](#)

Sample Assessment Questions

What share of households in your community lack broadband internet access at home?

Of those who have access, how many have reasonably fast, fixed broadband (cable, DSL, or fiber), and how many are limited to mobile devices with data limits or publicly available Wi-Fi?

How do your community members who lack home broadband access, or have only mobile device access, break down demographically?

How many households are without home broadband access or have mobile device access only, including children? Is lack of home access a known problem for your community's schools?

How many adults with limited or no home internet access in your community are experiencing unemployment? Is lack of home access or digital skills a known problem for your community's workforce agencies, employers, or adult education providers?

How many adults with limited or no home internet access in your community are older adults? Is lack of home access a known problem for your community's older adult services providers, including healthcare?

How many adults with limited or no home internet access in your community have a disability? Is lack of home access, appropriate equipment, or skills a known problem for your community's service providers and disability advocates?

To what extent do community members with limited or no home internet access use the internet elsewhere?

- At the public library?
- At some other community site?
- At a restaurant, coffeehouse, etc.
- At work?
- At school?
- Somewhere else?

What are the barriers to home internet?

- Is the **cost of service** a significant reason why community residents lack home internet service?
- Is **non-availability of broadband service** a significant reason why community residents lack home internet service?
- Is the **cost of computers** or other devices a significant reason why community residents lack home internet service?
- Does **lack of digital skills, confidence, or fear of technology** impact the adoption of home internet access by community residents?

What digital tasks or opportunities are community residents who have limited or no internet access most concerned about missing?

Step 3: Learning About Your Community: Surveys

In some cases, engaging directly with a wide array of community members who will benefit from digital inclusion services is necessary. This may be the case for smaller regions or libraries that serve a limited scope, such as academic libraries. Speaking with community members directly is an excellent way to inform the offerings, locations, and styles of digital skills programming.

In order to develop community trust, NDIA includes community members in conversation about their community data, especially when gathering information in surveys. Below is a script based on library outreach that includes a four-step method of disclosure and engagement.



Sample Script

Introduction: Always include your name, the organization name, and your affiliation (volunteer, director, school librarian, etc).

“Hello my name is _____ from the _____ library where I am a _____.”

Description of the Survey: Detail what types of questions may be asked, how long it may take, and the options for participating.

“We’re asking community members to share a little about their access to the internet and computers! This survey should take about six minutes to complete. I have an iPad here if you would like, or I can just ask you the questions. I also have a paper copy here.”

Disclosure of Data: Always detail what data will be collected, who the data will be shared with, and how it will be used.

“We are going to share what we are learning here today with _____, to help work towards a better future for our community, with better access to the internet and computers.”

Close Out: Thank the community member for their participation, and invite them to become a part of the larger conversation! Remember to continue to build trust by following up on questions or topics they may have mentioned.

“Thanks so much for sharing with us! You mentioned your internet is great, but your daughter-in-law hasn’t been able to get connected. We’re actually lending hotspots, so have her drop by to check one out!”

Are Families Underserved in Your Community?

Rutgers University and New America Foundation collaborated on this survey tool, **Are Families Underserved In Your Community** within their publication, [Learning at Home While Under-Connected: A Toolkit for Parent Discussions and Data Collection in Your Community](#)¹⁹ that can be provided to customers or walked through together. It covers a community member's current access and future needs with regard to devices, connectivity, and skills. There is both a survey and a one-pager to guide staff using this tool.

Quick Links to Resources

[Learning at Home While Under-Connected: A Toolkit for Parent Discussions and Data](#)

[Collection in Your Community](#)

[Sample Script](#)



Step 4: Sharing What You Have Learned

Research being done on collective and individual community needs can be leveraged for many further uses beyond just tailoring digital inclusion work. Often library boards, and other stakeholders, will be interested in learning more about current services and gaps, and many grants and funders require data to support proposals.

Here are several examples of digital inclusion needs assessments incorporated into community digital inclusion strategies “for publication.” Note that only one was led directly by a library, though the local public library systems were very much involved in others.

To what extent do community members with limited or no home internet access use the internet elsewhere?

- [Brownsville’s Digital Access Needs \(Brooklyn Public Library\)](#) ²⁰
- [City of San Jose Digital Inclusion Strategy](#) ²¹
- [Louisville Metro Digital Inclusion Plan](#) ²²
- [Austin Digital Inclusion Strategy](#) ²³

Writing a Digital Inclusion Plan

If your research leads your organization to writing a digital inclusion plan, rather than just a report on what you have learned, consider the following guides and templates for developing this document.

[The North Carolina Division of Broadband and Digital Equity](#)²⁴ developed a [digital inclusion template and guide](#) to help assist in the development and writing of a digital inclusion plan that includes specific guides and questions to help promote innovation and creative solutions to digital inclusion challenges. Specifically consider the sections on Vision, Goals, and Mission when developing your digital inclusion plan.

[Community Tech New York](#)²⁵ created the [Digital Equity Roadmap](#) – an assessment and analysis of the state of digital equity in Western New York, which includes a plan for solving many of the challenges encountered. The roadmap provides answers to digital inclusion questions, such as whether mobile devices can fulfill the needs of communities without reliable device and broadband access, and direct recommendations on how to support a variety of digital equity activities, from digital skill building to coalition building. Many of the solutions reported on and proposed include scaled models to be implemented at a local or regional level.

Quick Links to Resources

[Austin Digital Inclusion Strategy](#)

[Brownsville’s Digital Access Needs \(Brooklyn Public Library\)](#)

[The Charlotte Digital Inclusion Alliance’s Digital Inclusion Playbook](#)

[City of San Jose Digital Inclusion Strategy](#)

[Digital Equity Roadmap, Western New York](#)

[Digital Inclusion Template & Guide, NCDIT: North Carolina Department of Information Technology](#)

[Louisville Metro Digital Inclusion Plan](#)

Planning Your Future Digital Skills Programming Strategy

When considering your current digital skills offerings and how to scale them into a more formal strategy and service, take the time to survey current staff and audit current offerings, no matter how informal. Then consider applying a more formal framework and strategy.

In addition to inventorying and expanding on current digital skills offerings, utilize the data collected in both or either the community assessment and survey. These findings should assist in determining geographical regions that may require more attention, languages, and smaller target populations who will benefit further from digital skills engagement, as well as what topics to provide instruction on, or even how to teach.

- Who is currently offering digital skills support? How will this change?
- Where is your training happening? Where would you like training to happen?
- Do you have opportunities to offer digital skills training in an outreach capacity?
- Will training or classes be in person or online?
- Who are you already serving? Who are you hoping to train?
- How will you teach? What is already working?

While exploring these questions, consider diving deeper into the inclusivity of your future digital skills programming, as well as exploring avenues for partnerships. Below are a few examples that may help you influence your models:

Prior to committing to a single software for virtual or even in-person digital skills instruction, consider engaging in internal user testing. Utilizing staff or volunteers, attempt to run through an example class, requesting attendees and presenters attempt to engage with all the tools at their disposal, including chat, screensharing, polls, etc. Follow up with all the user test participants to determine where they were unable to engage, and collect information on how different devices and skills levels were able to engage and participate in preparation for actual virtual teaching. For more information on user testing for libraries, follow the [Orbis Cascade Alliance guide, “User Testing Overview for Librarians and Archivists: A Guide to Performing User Tests in Your Library.”](#)²⁶

When thinking about the goals of what your community may need to learn, developing a framework for digital literacy is helpful. Learning for Justice along with Teaching Tolerance developed a [Digital Literacy Framework](#)²⁷ for students that emphasizes levels of engagement online.

If physical space is a limitation or community members are unable to reach a library location for a variety of reasons, digital skills training can take place outside of libraries in partnership with other community spaces.

[Libraries Without Borders](#)²⁸ studied communities throughout American cities and determined community members often gather, waited, and socialized in laundromats while waiting for their washing to be done. They pioneered the Wash and Learn Initiative as a partnership between local libraries and laundromats to provide both traditional and digital skills assistance in English as well as locally spoken languages.

Some things to consider when choosing an external community partner include:

- Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it located on a transit route (if applicable)?
- Will the community feel safe in this space? What has the relationship with the community been like historically?
- Is there adequate electricity and internet? Is there sufficient HVAC for all seasons? Will snow be cleared in the winter? Is there parking?
- How involved does the space want to be with digital skills training?

Quick Links to Resources

[Digital Literacy Framework](#)

[User Testing Overview for Librarians and Archivists: A Guide to Performing User Tests in Your Library](#)



Digital Skills Resources

While a curriculum should be tailored to the community needs determined using community assessments and surveys, there is no need to write an entire curriculum from scratch. A variety of digital skills resources are available online for free, with options for led or self-paced learning. Below are a few examples.

* denotes resources with self-guided courses

† denotes resources for instructors

[Techboomers.com](#)²⁹ * A free educational website that teaches older adults and inexperienced internet users with basic computer skills about websites. Provides a vast array of articles, tutorials on 21st century online platforms, tools, and social media.

Lessons are available in English. Great for learning both how to use computers, tablets, and smartphones, as well as specific apps, and websites, and how to engage in online culture. Lessons are holistic, providing guidance, from downloading to deleting apps.

[DigitalLearn.org](#)³⁰ * A “one-stop shop” for computer and technology training for computer basics, hardware, software, and applications as well as basic job search resources. Resources include facilitator support for utilizing the courses and designing your own.

Lessons are available in English and Spanish. Great for self-guided learners and self-paced community learning. Great for visual learners with lower literacy skills.

[GCFLearnFree.org](#)³¹ *† Website with free resources and tools for learners to acquire necessary skills for 21st-century life. From Microsoft Office and email to reading and math, the site provides more than 180 topics, with more than 2,000 lessons, 800+ videos, and 55+ interactives and games.

Lessons are available in English and Spanish. Great for self-guided learners who may require a little more extensive training and assistance to guide their digital literacy journey. Requires basic literacy skills.

[Mozilla Foundation](#)³² † Free and open source tools and resources for facilitators to lead sessions on how to read, write, and participate on the web. Materials range from web literacy basics, coding, protecting your data, and more. Recommendations for facilitation and community engagement are also included.

Curriculum and courses are available in English. Great for facilitators looking to build and expand their in-person or virtual group sessions.

Google for Education, Applied Digital Skills ³³ *† Well-organized curriculum for teachers, covering over 1,000 topics. This platform offers an opportunity to integrate lessons into pre-existing Google Classrooms, or to teach directly through the program. Courses include a specific course on teaching this program. Self-guided learners can also jump in and follow self-guided classes.

Courses are offered in English. Great for community members who require a platform as well as curriculum to teach digital literacy and community members who hope to ramp up personal digital skills.

Grow with Google ³⁴ This digital skills service combines free, self-paced career skills courses, and low-cost career certifications in a simple, browser-based portal. The program also offers partnership opportunities for libraries that include facilitated classes, outreach support, and opportunities for community members to participate in a variety of digital skill building.

Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment ³⁵ *† The digital skills assessment portion of this resource is free of cost, but for a subscription fee, a data portal can be created to collect data on the needs of community members, as well as provide access to curricula that can assist in instruction.

Assessment and curricula are currently only offered in English. Excellent for assisting community members in determining where they should begin their digital skills journey.

Privacy, Security, and Safety Resources

While privacy, safety, and security are elements of most digital skills training, and many curricula touch on them, concerns surrounding safety and privacy can be major deterrents to community members when they are entering the digital sphere. Below are a few NDIA recommended resources for improving communication and instruction surrounding digital privacy, safety, and security.

Data Privacy Project ³⁶ † Created by and for NYC librarians, this curriculum was created to assist librarians in instructing community members on data privacy. Curriculum includes handouts and facilitation guides and is only available in English.

My Shadow ³⁷ *† Placing an emphasis on education around data and data privacy online, this project, by Tactical Tech, helps learners understand why and how their data is tracked on the web, as well as tips to control their digital footprint through sets of child-friendly infographics and learning modules.

Information is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Russian, and Arabic. The website also provides recommended apps as well as independent courses and curriculum for classes.

Internet Society ³⁸ * The project “Your Digital Footprint Matters” emphasizes learner understanding of their presence on social media through sets of modules. Their modules are appropriate for children and adult learners.

Courses and resources are available in English, Spanish, and French.

Connect Safely ³⁹ *† Connect Safely is a nonprofit organization based in California that has developed several infographics, modules, and guides for children, seniors, and families on topics focused on safety, privacy, and security on social media and the internet.

Courses and materials for self-paced or instructor-led classes are available in English and Spanish.

Strategy for Choosing a Digital Skills Tool or Building a Curriculum

When selecting the curriculum or tools you'll use to help your community build their digital skills, use the following questions to help guide your choice:

If the training is being led as a group, how much support does the instructor need?

If the training will be self-paced, how much accountability and support will participants need?

What languages should be prioritized?

Are community members confident navigating written instructions or are there other learning styles that should be included?

What accessibility concerns should be taken into account?

What is the budget for training? How will it be spent?

If you currently have a curriculum in place, or are working with a preferred tool, consider auditing your current approach by considering the following questions:

What are the current content areas covered? Consider mapping all current training and compare them to courses in any of the recommended tools above.

Does the schedule and pacing of current offerings meet the needs of the community?

Have community members provided informal feedback during instruction that can be taken into account moving forward?

Are some offerings more popular than others? Why? What sets these apart?

Are there areas of content that can be augmented with self-paced instruction or other resources?

Digital Navigators

Digital Navigators ⁴⁰ embody the support services that libraries already offer in the form of a staff member placed at a neighborhood branch or partner community-based organizations that provide social services.

The **Salt Lake City Public Library**, the **Urban Libraries Council**, and **NDIA** published the “**Digital Navigators Toolkit**” ⁴¹ in September 2021, including a case study of the Salt Lake City Public Library (SLCPL) pilot program. Delivered in partnership with Urban Libraries Council, with support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Salt Lake City Library program represents the successful implementation of digital navigators in a public library setting.

By the time direct service finished in July 2021, SLCPL digital navigators:

- Supported 585 individuals across 54 zip codes in Salt Lake City
- Recorded 75% of all interactions as lasting 15 minutes or longer
- Reported a measured increase in learner confidence and understanding of security on the internet

The “Digital Navigators Toolkit” provides details about the hiring process, training, daily workflow, program management, evaluation, outreach, and more to support the development of digital navigator programs. In addition, open source resources for building a digital navigator program are available on the **NDIA website**.

What Is a Digital Navigator?

These unique guides work to bring specialized knowledge and to help lighten the load of resource navigation for local librarians. Critically, they offer ongoing one-to-one technology support rather than one-time interactions. These continued interactions establish trust and provide a foundation for continuing education, a pillar of public library services. t often come from the community they serve, which makes them well-positioned to understand and address the technology-related concerns of their fellow community members. A public library embodies the innate trust that is critical to the role of a digital navigator.

Digital navigators should be community-focused and community-based individuals who are adept at engaging in resource navigation and empathetic support. NDIA's [Digital Navigator Job Description](#)⁴² further details the role and goals and can be at the end of this section.

The process of engaging with a digital navigator is shared in the infographic below, followed by relevant step-by-step tools.



Assess Needs, Evaluate, and Discuss: Intake Form

Data should be collected from each digital navigator interaction, and stored so outcomes can be measured. An intake form can be created via any forms and databasing tool, but should include the following data points:

- Name
- Phone
- Email
- Zip Code
- Preferred Language
- What kind of device are you using?
- Type of issue/need?
- How did you hear about this program?

Refer to Relevant Resources, Check in, and Evaluate

By using other tools in this toolkit, such as the Community Internet Provider worksheet, and current digital inclusion program audit, you will be able to easily refer to a number of resources the community member may need to access.

Throughout interactions with the same community member, feedback on recommended resources may help to evaluate their effectiveness for future inquiries, as well as the needs of the community member being served.

Complete Exit Survey

Using a format similar to the initial intake, developing a relevant exit survey will help to assess the level of success each community member finds, as well as other relevant data that may inform future digital skills training and provide further data for understanding the needs of the community.

- Name of Community Member
- Approximately how long did your interaction take?
- What type of device is the community member using?
- What kind of issue did you help them with?
- Add additional issues here, or “Other”
- Were you able to resolve their issue?
- If not, describe the problem.
- Other thoughts? Stories of impact you’d like to share?

Quick Links to Resources

[Digital Navigator Job Description](#)

[Digital Navigator Toolkit](#)

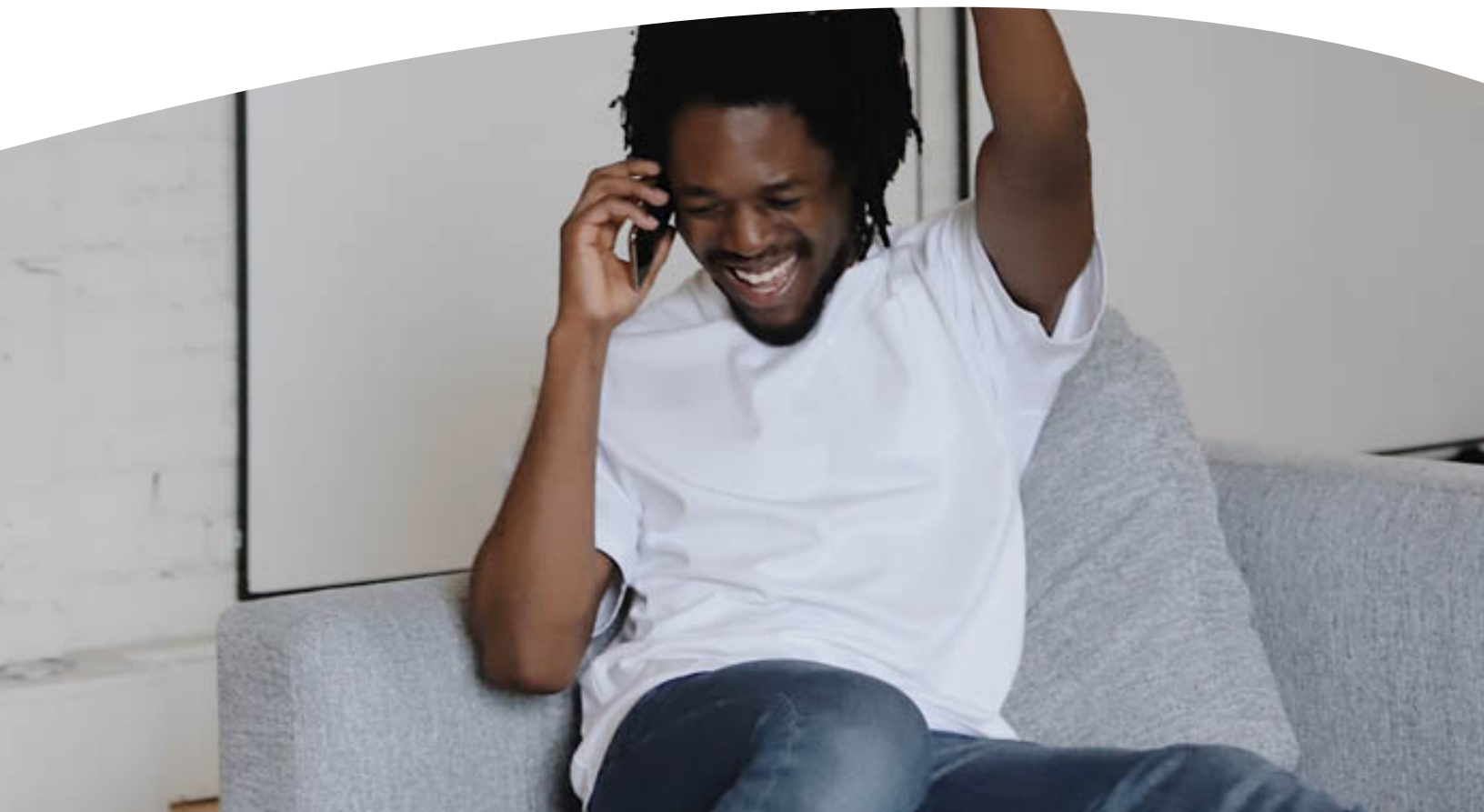
[Digital Skills Assessment](#)

[Exit Survey](#)

[Follow up Survey](#)

[Intake Form](#)

[Seniors 2 Seniors Program](#)



Digital Navigator Job Description

Title: Digital Navigator

Reports to: The Digital Navigator will report to [supervisor's title].

Job Overview: The Digital Navigator provides individualized or small group assistance to [community members, or specify eligible group(s)] who need affordable home internet service, affordable internet-capable devices, and/or coaching in introductory digital skills in order to become effective home internet users. This assistance is provided primarily by voice telephone but may also include email, text, video chat, and other communication methods that work for the learner.

The Digital Navigator's work is part of the [agency name]'s efforts to [insert agency integration] and equitable internet access for [residents of community name, or specify target group(s)].

Digital Navigator is a [full, part time position, embedded, or a volunteer position].

Responsibilities and Duties:

- Receive, return, or initiate telephone contact with clients seeking assistance or identified by [agency name] for assistance.
- Discuss with each client their home internet access or need for home internet access, technology experiences, and their devices.
- Assess their access to technology, current digital skill level pertaining to what they need to accomplish the plan, connectivity needs, and internet use priorities. Set agreed goals for Digital Navigator services. Confirm the details with the client.
- If necessary, advise clients about free or affordable home internet service options for which they may qualify, assist clients to apply for services they choose, and support their efforts to secure service.
- If necessary, advise clients about sources of affordable computers or other internet connected devices for which they may qualify, and support their efforts to acquire appropriate devices and where they can get help for repair.
- Coach clients as necessary to use their home internet services in order to meet their internet use priorities. This may include both in person, phone, and online interactions, as well as referral to sources of additional digital literacy skill training.
- Track each client's progress and types of requests, keep accurate and timely records, and report outcomes as required.
- Plan and manage assistance to each client with the goal of fulfilling the agreed goals.

Digital Navigator Job Description (continued...)

Critical Skills and Aptitudes:

- Ability to embrace the challenge of learning and teaching basic technological concepts related to internet services, computer and device characteristics, and common online services and applications
- Excellent self-organization, language capacity, and cultural competency
- Excellent telephone and online communication skills, including the ability to establish trust with clients of varied educational and cultural background
- Ability to demonstrate positive attitude, excellent interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity, and a sense of humor in working with diverse customers, coworkers, and community
- Ability to creatively solve problems and negotiate and handle stressful situations in a positive manner
- Ability to provide excellent customer service, establish appropriate boundaries with clients, and demonstrate innovation and flexibility

When considering the ways in which digital navigators could benefit your community, consider the examples of digital navigators and similar programs.

The **Livingston County Library Tech Tutor Program** consists of eight libraries in Livingston County, NY, that have partnered together to offer a digital navigator program, known locally as the Tech Tutor program. The Tech Tutor has scheduled hours at each library throughout the month offering one-on-one technology training sessions, targeted specifically towards older adults. Community members are able to make appointments for assistance with things such as setting up or navigating a new device, using a library app on a device, setting up an email account, general instruction on using a computer, etc.

The **Seniors 2 Seniors Program**⁴³ coordinated by Tri-Co Connections in Potter County, PA launched to address the digital knowledge gap magnified after fiber connection roll outs by Tri-County Rural Electric Co-op. In response, they worked with local education partners and the area agency on aging to launch the Seniors 2 Seniors Program. The program delivers instructor-led, hands-on computer skills and internet basics training for older adults, who are partnered with high school seniors for in-class support. The high school students receive school credit, and the program participants gain vital digital skills, all while strengthening social connections and bridging generational divides.

Access to Broadband

Library internet access strategies generally fall into five broad categories:

- Public access computer workstations
- Mobile computer labs/classrooms
- Public Wi-Fi access and ways to enhance its usefulness (e.g., laptop and tablet lending), including the sharing of bandwidth with nearby homes and partnerships with organizations reaching target communities
- Short-term home circulation of mobile internet devices such as mobile hotspots on their own or bundled with laptops and tablets
- Helping patrons secure affordable home internet service from other sources, such as ISP discount programs or nonprofit broadband reseller services (this may also involve helping them acquire affordable computers, tablets, etc., to make use of the service)

Most libraries have strongly established their public computer access and training labs, but NDIA recommended solutions to other access can be found below.

Public Wi-Fi Expansion

Libraries typically have high-quality, high-speed Wi-Fi access available to patrons on the premises. Like traditional workstations, Wi-Fi access inside the library may end when the doors are locked for the night or weekend, however, many library staff may be familiar with seeing a parking lot of cars lit by glowing computer screens after hours, as customers connect to the free library Wi-Fi. By responding to this community-lead need, libraries can acknowledge and embrace the ways in which community members have already created their own access solution.

Expanding the reach and caliber of this Wi-Fi can create “Wi-Fi zones” for customers that reach far beyond the library walls, such as the expanded Wi-Fi piloted by the **Baltimore County Public Library** in early 2020. ⁴⁴ The reasoning for allowing after-hours access is based on need and public service. People without home internet access, especially students, may need to perform online tasks at times when the library isn’t open, and it’s appropriate and easy for the library to make that possible.

Conducting a community needs assessment will be the best way to learn if there is a sufficient need for a library Wi-Fi access point after traditional hours. If there is such a need, libraries can consider ways to mitigate community safety risks associated with unattended Wi-Fi zones. For example, libraries can consider increasing the lighting available at the location, provide increased and welcoming outdoor seating, extend Wi-Fi over parking lots, and ultimately limit the number of hours Wi-Fi would be available after the close of the facility.

When considering whether expanded public Wi-Fi zones would benefit the community, consider tracking the following data:

LIBRARY LOCATION	WI-FI LOGINS DURING SERVICE HOURS	WI-FI LOGINS OUTSIDE OF SERVICE HOURS

Additional options for public Wi-Fi may be expanded further from branches using mobile vehicles. [Brooklyn Public Library](#) ⁴⁵ expanded Wi-Fi from branches into densely populated neighborhoods near their branches, and also outfitted their existing mobile library services vehicles to become mobile Wi-Fi hotspots, as well as providing computers on and off the vehicles in targeted areas.

For instructions on developing similar projects and programs, the examples and resources found in the [“American Library Association’s Emergency Connectivity Fund Toolkit.”](#) ⁴⁶ Templates for device inventories, projected Wi-Fi expansion project timelines, and CIPA compliance details for boosted Wi-Fi are all included.

Understanding Your Library’s Internet

The Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Internet2 created the [“The Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit”](#) and [“Broadband Improvement Plan”](#) ⁴⁷ in an effort to help libraries understand their offerings as well as the needs of their community and how they can become stronger advocates for broadband access through activities and data.

Short-Term Home Circulation of Mobile Internet Devices

One of the original hotspot lending pilots started by the [New York Public Library](#), New York City, NY, has now grown into to a 10,000-unit program, operated by NYPL ⁴⁸ along with the Brooklyn Public Library and Queens Library, working with Sprint and nonprofit Sprint reseller Mobile Beacon. The three systems lend the units at no cost, supported by major funding from Google.

Circulating Wi-Fi devices is inherently a temporary solution to the problem of affordable broadband. Hotspot programs work well when there is reliable signal strength but that is not always the case, particularly in rural areas or urban areas with low connectivity. These devices rely on the signal of private 4G and 5G networks supported by telecom corporations, and may be impacted by landscape and community density. Signal strength and location can vary when antennas are removed or shifted, resulting in strong internet signals one day and none the next. ⁴⁹

If you are considering hotspots as a solution to connectivity, or already using them, check your area to ensure that cell towers are providing service to these hotspots. You can search your hotspot provider and surmise coverage using a cell tower mapping tool like the open sourced [Cell Mapper](#).⁵⁰ Record your results and save this information for future use.

HOTSPOT PROVIDER	COVERAGE AREA

Securing Affordable Home Internet Service or Broadband Subsidy

Lower-income residents may qualify for heavily discounted broadband service from the local cable or telco ISP, depending on their location. For a listing of these programs across the country, see NDIA's [Free & Low-Cost Internet webpage](#)⁵¹. A library program or flyer can help the patron learn about these options and apply for one that makes sense.

To help understand and guide your research on local and low-cost internet services, use the [Local Internet Options Worksheet](#) on the following page.

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

The **Affordable Connectivity Program** is an FCC broadband affordability program, launched in 2022, that provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers (footnote: households must contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price for an eligible device under ACP).

Each household can receive a maximum of one monthly service discount and one device discount. This means that even if multiple members of a household are individually eligible for an ACP discount, the household in question can only receive one monthly service discount and one device discount.

For full details on eligibility, participating service providers, enrollment, and promotional materials to share within your library and community, visit acpbenefit.org, or utilize the FCC's toolkit for outreach and promotion of the program, fcc.gov/acp-consumer-outreach-toolkit.

Quick Links to Resources

[Affordable Connectivity Program Consumer Outreach Toolkit](#)

[American Library Association's Emergency Connectivity Fund Toolkit](#)

[Cell Mapper](#)

[Free & Low-Cost Internet](#)

[Local Internet Options Worksheet](#)

[Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit](#)

Local Internet Options Worksheet

Using the following resources, determine what local internet offerings are available, and whether they provide a low-cost plan. If there are few options, expand your search to include cellular network providers as well.

- NDIA's List of Free and Low-Cost Internet Plans: digitalinclusion.org/free-low-cost-internet-plans
- Broadband Providers: broadbandnow.com
- Local Digital Inclusion Resources: www.everyoneon.org

Internet Service Providers:

List the information you can find. The provider's name is the most important.

PROVIDER NAME	LOW-COST PLAN?	PROVIDER SERVICE AREA

Cellular Service Providers

The provider's name is the most important. Skip the plan if it's not easy to find. Links are great.

PROVIDER NAME	LOW-COST PLAN?

Access to Internet Capable Devices

Refurbished Devices

Several communities across the US now have one or more professional, nonprofit computer refurbishing organizations or equivalent programs. There are also local, for-profit refurbishers that may be willing to donate or heavily discount some ready-to-use computer systems for low-income households. Libraries, like other digital inclusion practitioners, can work with these organizations and companies – directly or through partners – to help patrons acquire very inexpensive or free refurbished PCs and laptops.

The Toledo Public Library partnered with **PCs for People** to assist their community members in acquiring a personal computer. Community members were able to be guided through an application process online and choose which library branch they would like to receive their appropriate device through. In addition, a grant provided financial aid to community members, decreasing the cost of a device from low to free. ⁵²

Choosing Refurbished Devices

When evaluating devices from refurbishers for community use, consider what an appropriate device would be for a community member. Often, refurbished devices come in a variety of formats, from tablets to desktop computers, and may not necessarily meet the needs of the community. Consider comparing the devices available from the following refurbishers and how they may meet the needs of specific audiences.

PCs for People ⁵³

- Service Type: Computer Refurbishing and Home Connectivity
- Information: A computer refurbisher with a national network of partners and affiliates who work to provide communities with low-cost internet and affordable devices. PCs for People’s pricing model works in three tiers, which they refer to as Good, Better, and Best.
- Service Area: National, with offices in Minnesota, Colorado, Ohio, Maryland, and Missouri

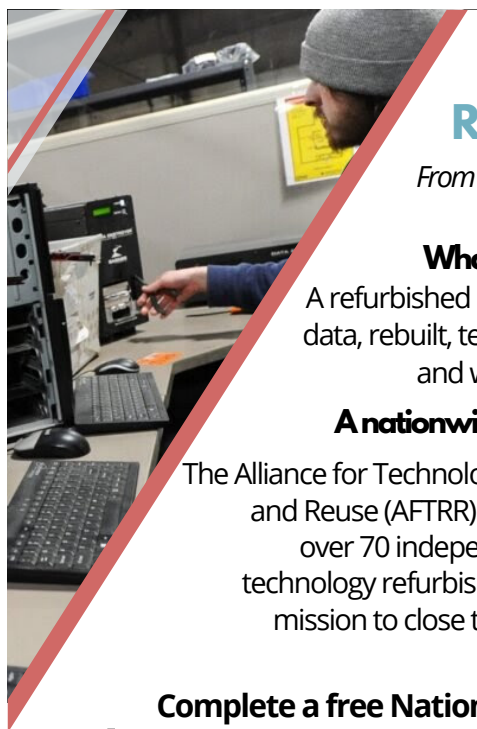
Human I-T ⁵⁴

- Service Type: Computer Refurbishing and Home Connectivity
- Information: Human I-T assists organizations and individuals who are interested in acquiring refurbished devices at low cost. Human I-T also distributes 4G LTE wireless services through Wi-Fi hotspots. Service Area: National, with an office in Detroit

Computer Reach ⁵⁵

- Service Type: Computer Refurbishing and Home Connectivity
- Information: Based in Pittsburgh, Computer Reach provides support for nonprofit organizations and government agencies that seek assistance distributing devices to their service communities.
- Service Area: National

DEVICE & PROVIDER	COST	LIMITATIONS	IDEAL AUDIENCE



How To Purchase Refurbished Computers

From an AFTRR nonprofit refurbisher near you

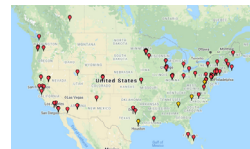


What is a refurbished computer?

A refurbished computer has been wiped of previous data, rebuilt, tested, loaded with an operating system and warranted by the refurbisher.

A nationwide network of refurbishers

The Alliance for Technology Refurbishing and Reuse (AFTRR) is comprised of over 70 independent nonprofit technology refurbishers each with a mission to close the digital divide.



www.aftrr.org/map-locator

- 1 Complete a free National Cristina Foundation Partner application.**
 Nonprofit organizations and government agencies will be connected with the most appropriate AFTRR member to receive equipment. Visit www.cristina.org/become-partner/
- 2 Place order and make arrangements with refurbisher for pickup or delivery.**
 Small and large-scale quantities are available depending on the refurbisher.



**AFTRR is a program of the Digitunity, a 501c(3) nonprofit organization. www.digitunity.org*

Longer-Term Lending Programs

In most cases, it is ideal for users to own the devices they receive - this gives them autonomy and reduces oversight and maintenance responsibilities for an administering organization. There may be some instances where loaning devices is preferable, such as when the demand far exceeds the number of available devices and there is a need to share them among users, and when device control and software standardization is important, such as with school districts. However, this additional control layer should be seriously considered and only implemented if necessary. Many libraries have implemented loaned laptops, Chromebooks, and tablets with internet connectivity and demonstrated substantial success. These programs are very popular, and the demand outweighs the availability, as seen with weeks'-long waitlists. Several libraries have instituted longer-term lending programs targeted in lower-income communities, sometimes tied to a digital skills program.

Columbus Metropolitan Library⁵⁶ (CML), OH, focuses its efforts on lending devices for up to three years to residents in the Near East and South Side neighborhoods of Columbus, OH, where CML has determined a substantial need for affordable broadband service and device access. CML conducted market research and decided that the long-term loaning of Chromebook laptop computers is the best option to meet the community's needs and provide the necessary tools and services for those that currently lack access to devices. CML will upload CML digital programs, services, and library materials to the Samsung Galaxy tablets and lend those tablets to CML customers who participate in the Lobby Stop program. CML's successful application to the FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund allows for the continuation and expansion of this program.

Seattle Public Library⁵⁷ (SPL), in Seattle, WA, works in partnership with the local housing authority and community-based organizations to provide 60 laptop computers with six months of connectivity to households living in low-income housing in the NewHolly community. In addition, community builders at the **Seattle Housing Authority** (SHA) conduct outreach to identify households in need. Finally, local training partners provide on-site training at the **New Holly Library** branch on SHA's Campus of Learners with Digital Navigators working with learners on a longer-term plan for acquiring their own personal devices and enrollment in a low-cost broadband program.

Beginning in May 2020, the [Bronx Digital Equity Coalition Lending Library](#)⁵⁸, NY, was created when the Bronx Community Relief Effort and other funders came together to make bulk purchases of Chromebooks and Boost hotspots to donate to school partners who would then lend them out to students. After handing out over 500 devices, they realized there was still a significant need, so DreamYard created a community Lending Library. The Lending Library had Chromebooks and headphones offered to program participants, community members, and local nonprofit and school partners. Some loans were made for a short period (four weeks for a virtual summer internship) and some for the entire school year. Students who received a loaner laptop for the whole school year were not required to return them. Spreading the word about the library was important to make sure the computers were used. In addition to letting DreamYard staff and the **Bronx Digital Equity Coalition** members know that laptops were available, a flyer was shared (in Spanish and English) with a link to a form to collect requests.

Quick Links to Resources

[Computer Reach](#)

[Digitunity](#)

[Human I-T](#)

[PCs for People](#)

Increasing Impact: Collaborations, Partnerships, and Coalitions

Collaboration⁵⁹ can take many forms, from simple cooperation around a single resource or event, to the establishment of a formal **coalition**⁶⁰ or funded program **partnership**.⁶¹ Some local libraries have done all three in the cause of digital inclusion. Regardless of the formality of the relationship, a discussion and clear delineation of roles and responsibilities is recommended for success. This can be as simple as a letter of understanding or a fully written contract.

Before searching for new connections, determine what relationships your library may have already cultivated. Determine if there are organizations booking computer labs or volunteers already dropping in on an individual basis. Exploring and formalizing pre-existing relationships can help to build community trust as well as shortening the time from identifying a potential partner to the provision of service.

Partnerships foster innovation, expansion, and collaboration while supporting efficient resource management, common mission, and outreach to demographically similar communities. Some goals of partnerships for libraries are:

- Expand and uplift library resources and services
- Increase capacity beyond library offerings
- Connect with new audiences
- Extend reach geographically
- Support greater community capacity building

For some examples of these successful partnerships, see the examples below:

Rochester Navigators Program, Rochester Public Library⁶², in Rochester, NY, partners with the Literacy Volunteers of Rochester, who volunteer at the library as Digital Literacy Volunteer Navigators to provide free, on-site, drop-in service to community members who require assistance with technology. Navigators assist participants with a range of needs, from learning a new computer skill to completing important computer-related tasks.

The Digital Equity Now⁶³ program provides a device, 12-month unlimited data hotspot, and 15 hours of tech education to any low-income resident living in Westchester County, NY. Residents earn full ownership of the device and hotspot by completing the education requirement. In addition, 11 partners, including the **Westchester Library System, NY**, and **Yonkers Library, NY**, and led by **The STEM Alliance**, provide curriculum based on clients' needs, such as **Tech Skills for Success**, **Personal Branding Lab**, and a family program for parents to learn alongside young children.

Brooklyn Public Library's Teacher Lab⁶⁴, in New York City, NY, is an online information literacy and research skills course designed to help K-12 educators feel more confident accessing and using library resources to support classroom work and strengthen their lesson plans. Course topics include navigating the library collection and online resources, finding primary sources in an archive, searching databases, using research tools, and evaluating resources from journal articles. Video lectures, discussion boards, and independent work keep the learning varied and interactive. Participants create an annotated bibliography as their final assignment to pass the course. Teacher Lab provides a valuable learning opportunity that teachers can complete independently, at no cost, and their own pace. Course graduates can earn state-certified credit toward their teaching license requirements.

Effective Partnerships

When developing a partnership or strengthening an existing partnership, consider exploring the following ideas together in a meeting to ensure the partnership serves all missions and is able to also benefit the community. Below is a brainstorming guide that can be used to facilitate a discussion on the topics. Even if a partnership is decades long, it can be helpful to revisit these topics with regularity to ensure smooth communication and engagement.

	LIBRARY	PARTNER
<p>Understand each other.</p> <p>Do you know what your partner needs and is hoping to gain from working with you?</p> <p>Does your partner understand what the library needs and hopes to gain?</p> <p>What does reciprocity look like?</p>		
<p>Empower staff to be a good partner.</p> <p>What does this partnership look like for staff?</p> <p>How will this impact their daily work?</p> <p>What are the expectations for your own and each other's staff?</p>		
<p>Share the work and the credit!</p> <p>How will you share your exciting news?</p> <p>Who will lead the work?</p> <p>How much planning is needed?</p>		

Digital Inclusion Coalitions

Many libraries and other community organizations choose to join forces and form a digital inclusion coalition to:

- Present a unified community voice around digital inclusion
- Raise awareness about digital inequities and their impact on the community
- Support digital inclusion providers through professional development, networking, and information-sharing
- Strengthen the impact of digital inclusion programs through service partnerships
- Raise funding for digital inclusion programs
- Build political support for public investment in digital inclusion programs
- Develop a collective understanding of the need for digital inclusion among providers in specific areas of community development (i.e., health, education, workforce development, civic engagement, racial justice)

The Role of Coalitions

Digital inclusion efforts in many communities across the country include collaborations and partnerships as well as free-standing programs. Coalitions are unique because of three effects they create for their member organizations, participants, and communities:

1. **The advocacy effect.** Coalitions focus local attention on the issue of digital inclusion as a specific area for public policy and community action. Whether or not their organizers intend it, broad-based digital inclusion coalitions have an “advocacy effect” that raises the profile of digital inclusion for their communities’ media, opinion leaders, and the general public.
2. **The alignment effect.** Coalitions create a framework to align the perspectives and efforts of the varied community players that may, at the beginning, share a concern about digital inclusion but little else: libraries, local governments, affordable housing providers, workforce and social service agencies, and traditional digital inclusion training and access programs. In general, pushing in the same direction is more satisfying and effective than disjointed and potentially duplicative efforts.
3. **The network effect.** By bringing a range of parties together in one room, coalitions set the stage for their member organizations to better understand each others’ perspectives, share information and strategic insights, and discover opportunities for new relationships – including two- or three-way collaborations and program partnerships.

The Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook

NDIA recently updated and refined the [“Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook”](#)⁶⁵ – the premier guide to building, structuring, and maintaining coalitions in the digital inclusion sphere. This guidebook was created based on the experiences of 23 place-based coalitions, mapping best practices, success stories, and how coalitions naturally formed. The following graphic demonstrates how coalitions are built from community power and details the level of engagement and partners needed to build a strong coalition.

Libraries and Digital Inclusion Coalitions

Advocacy, Alignment, and Networking > Influence and Impact

Libraries are a driving force in local digital inclusion coalitions. Places like Salt Lake City, the Finger Lakes region of New York, and San Francisco demonstrate libraries' positive impact on building and driving community coalition efforts.

Salt Lake City Public Library, UT, is a member of **Utah Communities Connect**⁶⁶ (**UtahCC**): **Utah's Digital Alliance** and provides staff time and resources to support the partnership. Utah Communities Connect's mission is to address digital inequities by bringing awareness and actions around digital access and readiness to communities throughout Utah. SLCPL's participation ensures cross-collaboration and coordination of the library's role in offering resources and information to address barriers to digital literacy. UtahCC is an alliance created to bring awareness and action to Utah's communities around digital access, devices, and education. Alliance members collaborate to create a digital inclusion network of organizations and individuals and coordinate local solutions to address digital inequities through cross-sector collaboration and coordination of resources and information. As a voice for digital equity, UtahCC identifies opportunities for access to broadband, devices, and digital skills training. They also support digital inclusion community programs, share resources and best practices, and bring awareness to community members and stakeholders to become digital inclusion advocates and changemakers.

The **Finger Lakes Digital Inclusion Coalition, NY**, with support from the **Pioneer Library System** and the **Rochester Regional Library Council**, is the first rural-suburban digital inclusion coalition in the US. The FLDIC organized a Digital Inclusion Summit in 2019 with over 130 participants from across the state. The data collected from the summit, in addition to input from a focus group of Pioneer library staff members, served as the platform for guiding the work of the coalition. That same year, the FLDIC hired a part-time digital inclusion coordinator, funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The coalition hosted regular coalition meetings and distributed a bi-weekly email newsletter, while membership continued to grow. In 2020, a Board of Directors was established, along with bylaws and a three-year strategic plan. The work continues and the FLDIC held a virtual 2021 Digital Inclusion Summit with more than 170 participants representing community organizations and interest groups. The coalition continues to serve as the hub to exchange timely information about government programs, funding opportunities, community success stories, strategies for addressing digital equity challenges in the Finger Lakes, and awareness for digital inclusion.⁶⁷

The [San Francisco Public Library](#) ⁶⁸, CA, spearheaded the first citywide “Connect with Tech” Week, in collaboration with more than 20 partners, to promote online access and technology skill building to bridge the digital divide. The week has become an annual citywide event for the library and its partners to promote resources, training, and services in support of digital inclusion. Throughout the week, library staff, tech workers, and industry professionals partner to hold free tech-training programs, from basic computer skills to advanced coding classes, throughout the library system and partner locations. A tech expo is held for community members to learn about resources; join with policymakers, nonprofits, and ISPs to discuss digital equity; and attend a tech fair to fix devices. Programs are in multiple languages so that diverse groups of community members can participate. The week also serves as an open house for library services and brings in new community members and volunteers. The library scheduled Connect with Tech Week to take place during Digital Inclusion Week, the first week of October.

Quick Links to Resources

[Brooklyn Public Library’s Teacher Lab](#)

[Digital Equity Now](#)

[Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook](#)

[Finger Lakes Digital Inclusion Coalition](#)

[Utah Communities Connect](#)

Resources and Further Guidance for Digital Inclusion Initiatives

National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)

NDIA advances digital equity by supporting community programs and equipping policymakers to act. NDIA is a community of digital inclusion practitioners and advocates. We work collaboratively to craft, identify and disseminate financial and operational resources for digital inclusion programs while serving as a bridge to policymakers and the general public.

NDIA combines grassroots community engagement with technical knowledge, research, and coalition building to advocate on behalf of people working in their communities for digital equity. NDIA affiliates total 700+ in 47 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands (as of spring 2022).

The following resources are on the NDIA website to continue guiding New York libraries and their partner organizations in developing and enhancing digital equity work:

- [NYSL Webinar Series:](#)
 - Digital Equity Barriers & Strategies Webinar
 - Partnerships and Coalitions Webinar
 - Digital Navigator Webinars Parts 1 & 2
 - Data Collection & Analysis Webinar
 - Asset Mapping Webinar

- [Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook](#)
- [Digital Navigator Model](#)
- [Digital Inclusion Startup Manual](#)
- [2022 Federal Digital Inclusion Policy Cheat Sheet](#)
- Monthly Community Calls and more at digitalinclusion.org

New York State Library

The New York State Library is part of the Office of Cultural Education within the New York State Education Department. The NYSL's Digital Equity Resources offer access to reports, the 2020 Webinar Series, and examples of best practices. You can access this content at nysl.nysed.gov/digitalequity.

American Library Association

The Public Library Association, a division of the American Library Association, provides digital skills resources and information on best practices for implementing digital inclusion programs within public libraries. The PLA also provides the DigitalLearn.org website and content, offering a collection of video-based learning modules. Additional PLA strategies include technology support for rural libraries, extending Wi-Fi signals, supporting a changing workforce during COVID-19 recovery, and more. Visit ala.org/pla/initiatives/digitalliteracy for more information and to access these resources.

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[AlbanyCanCode.org](#)

[Brooklyn Public Library](#)

[DreamYard in the Bronx](#)

[Frederick Douglass Community Library - Rochester Public Library](#)

[Greenburgh Library](#)

[Lehman College - CUNY](#)

[Literacy Rochester](#)

[METRO Library Council](#)

[Monroe Free Library - Ramapo-Catskill Library System](#)

[New York State Library](#)

[Sully Branch Library - Rochester Public Library](#)

[The John R. Oishei Foundation](#)

[The STEM Alliance - Westchester](#)

[Wayne - Finger Lakes BOCES](#)

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Tools + Worksheets

What Does the Digital Divide Look Like in Your Area?

Gathering data on computer and internet use in your area

Complete the following chart for your county. Use census tables, NYS Digital Equity Portal, as well as the reports shared on pages 8-10 to find this information.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018
American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

	STATE	_____ COUNTY
HOUSEHOLDS WITH A COMPUTER		_____ %
...WITH A DESKTOP OR LAPTOP		_____ %
...WITH A SMARTPHONE		_____ %
...WITH A TABLET OR PORTABLE WIRELESS COMPUTER		_____ %
...WITH OTHER		_____ %
HOUSEHOLDS WITH A BROADBAND INTERNET SUBSCRIPTION		_____ %
...CELLULAR DATA PLAN		_____ %
...BROADBAND SUCH AS CABLE, FIBER OPTIC, OR DSL		_____ %
SATELLITE		_____ %
...DIAL-UP ALONE		_____ %
...OTHER SERVICE ALONE		_____ %

Gather Data on Internet Service Providers (ISP) in Your Area

Internet speeds vary widely throughout states and regions. To see how your area compares, go to BroadbandNow at broadbandnow.com and enter your zip code.

Then complete the following:

There are _____ residential internet providers. The fastest speed available is _____ Mbps

There are _____ mobile internet providers. The fastest speed available is _____ Mbps

The average download speed in my area is _____ Mbps

The lowest price is \$ _____ /month for service at _____ Mbps from _____ (ISP)

The highest price is \$ _____ /month for service at _____ Mbps from _____ (ISP)

If your area is covered by one of the providers listed below, individuals may be eligible for discounted service if they meet certain age or income criteria. Discount prices are not listed on BroadbandNow.

Discount internet and technology for individuals in New York:

PROVIDER	PROGRAM NAME	WEBSITE	INTERNET	DEVICES

Sample Script

Introduction: Always include your name, the organization name, and your affiliation (volunteer, director, school librarian, etc).

“Hello my name is _____ from the _____ library where I am a _____.”

Description of the Survey: Detail what types of questions may be asked, how long it may take, and the options for participating.

“We’re asking community members to share a little about their access to the internet and computers! This survey should take about six minutes to complete. I have an iPad here if you would like, or I can just ask you the questions. I also have a paper copy here.”

Disclosure of Data: Always detail what data will be collected, who the data will be shared with, and how it will be used.

“We are going to share what we are learning here today with _____, to help work towards a better future for our community, with better access to the internet and computers.”

Close Out: Thank the community member for their participation, and invite them to become a part of the larger conversation! Remember to continue to build trust by following up on questions or topics they may have mentioned.

“Thanks so much for sharing with us! You mentioned your internet is great, but your daughter-in-law hasn’t been able to get connected. We’re actually lending hotspots, so have her drop by to check one out!”

Public Wi-Fi Expansion

Libraries typically have high-quality, high-speed Wi-Fi access available to patrons on the premises. Like traditional workstations, Wi-Fi access inside the library may end when the doors are locked for the night or weekend, however, many library staff may be familiar with seeing a parking lot of cars lit by glowing computer screens after hours, as customers connect to the free library Wi-Fi. By responding to this community-lead need, libraries can acknowledge and embrace the ways in which community members have already created their own access solution.

Expanding the reach and caliber of this Wi-Fi can create “Wi-Fi zones” for customers that reach far beyond the library walls, such as the expanded Wi-Fi piloted by the **Baltimore County Public Library** in early 2020. ⁴⁵ The reasoning for allowing after-hours access is based on need and public service. People without home internet access, especially students, may need to perform online tasks at times when the library isn’t open, and it’s appropriate and easy for the library to make that possible. expand their in-person or virtual group sessions.

Conducting a community needs assessment will be the best way to learn if there is a sufficient need for a library Wi-Fi access point after traditional hours. If there is such a need, libraries can consider ways to mitigate community safety risks associated with unattended Wi-Fi zones. For example, libraries can consider increasing the lighting available at the location, provide increased and welcoming outdoor seating, extend Wi-Fi over parking lots, and ultimately limit the number of hours Wi-Fi would be available after the close of the facility.

When considering whether expanded public Wi-Fi zones would benefit the community, consider tracking the following data:

LIBRARY LOCATION	WI-FI LOGINS DURING SERVICE HOURS	WI-FI LOGINS OUTSIDE OF SERVICE HOURS

If you are considering hotspots as a solution to connectivity, or already using them, check your area to ensure that cell towers are providing service to these hotspots. You can search your hotspot provider and surmise coverage using a cell tower mapping tool like the open sourced [Cell Mapper](#).⁵¹ Record your results and save this information for future use.

HOTSPOT PROVIDER	COVERAGE AREA

Securing Affordable Home Internet Service or Broadband Subsidy

Lower-income residents may qualify for heavily discounted broadband service from the local cable or telco ISP, depending on their location. For a listing of these programs across the country, see NDIA's [Free & Low-Cost Internet](#) webpage⁵². A library program or flyer can help the patron learn about these options and apply for one that makes sense.

To help understand and guide your research on local and low-cost internet services, use the [Local Internet Options Worksheet](#) on the following page.

Local Internet Options Worksheet

Using the following resources, determine what local internet offerings are available, and whether they provide a low-cost plan. If there are few options, expand your search to include cellular network providers as well.

- NDIA's List of Free and Low-Cost Internet Plans: digitalinclusion.org/free-low-cost-internet-plans
- Broadband Providers: broadbandnow.com
- Local Digital Inclusion Resources: www.everyoneon.org

Internet Service Providers:

List the information you can find. The provider's name is the most important.

PROVIDER NAME	LOW-COST PLAN?	PROVIDER SERVICE AREA

Cellular Service Providers

The provider's name is the most important. Skip the plan if it's not easy to find. Links are great.

PROVIDER NAME	LOW-COST PLAN?

DEVICE & PROVIDER	COST	LIMITATIONS	IDEAL AUDIENCE

New York State
Library

