Extension Digital Volunteer Initiative Guide

National Digital Education Extension Team (NDEET) ECOP

Broadband & Digital Access Program Action Team

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Special thanks to the National 4-H Council for use of the 4-H Tech Changemakers Guide as a resource for this guide. Many components of this guide were adapted from this groundbreaking effort.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

Extension Committee on Organization and Policy

Extension Foundation New Technologies for Ag Extension Grant

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

OVERVIEW OF THE EXTENSION DIGITAL VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE

Background and Purpose

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 20 million people in the United States lack broadband Internet access.[1] That's more than 20 million people who are cut off from valuable online educational, physical and mental health care, financial management, career development, and business development tools. To help close this digital divide, the U.S. Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) invested billions to states to expand high-speed Internet access primarily in underserved rural and urban communities. However, expanded access is only part of the solution. Building digital literacy skills is the other vital component in the effort to make Internet resources more available and equitable. The Digital Volunteer Initiative seeks to build these essential skills to help advance quality of life through the resources available through the Internet.

Leadership

Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) and the National Digital Education Extension Team (NDEET)/Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) Broadband and Digital Access Program Action Team seek to address the challenge of gaining digital literacy by working with volunteers to provide information technology (IT) training and support in communities. The project leads are grateful to the 4-H National Council's Tech Changemaker program for paving the way for this work.

A History of Volunteer Success

Cooperative Extension Service (CES) has a long history of engaging volunteers to help advance local skills and knowledge. Research in the realm of digital literacy points to this same model as a potential positive resource. In study released in 2022, respondents stated they were far more comfortable turning to people they know (e.g., friends and family) for assistance with digital devices than they are to ask for help from formal and remote support systems.[2] According to a 2022 National Survey conducted by Purdue University Center for Regional Development and Southern Rural Development Center, people are more likely open to assistance with digital devices from 1) family (approximately 65%) and 2) friends (approximately 44%). Organizations and other formal types of support, including dedicated IT support, fell considerably behind these two groups (respondents could select more than one answer). This is the ideal context for Extension's expertise in training community volunteers. For well over 50 years, Extension volunteers have educated their neighbors in everything from gardening to financial management to healthy lifestyles—and technology skills. In 2020 through the 4-H Tech Changemakers program, 400 teenagers taught tailored digital skills to 10,000 adults in 160 communities (National 4-H Council Annual Report, 2020). This Digital Volunteer Initiative builds on these efforts to develop an IT support model for adult volunteers.

Digital Volunteer Initiative Goals

In addition to increasing rural and urban broadband users' access to valuable online resources, this initiative seeks to:
- Increase the percentage of adults volunteering in digital literacy within their communities
- Grow the number of digital literacy services in each community
- Leverage Extension's educational programming
- Convene community partners and strengthen collaboration
- Enhance self-efficacy and/or comfort with digital skills among key groups in a community
- Strengthen social and community connections
- Provide guidance on cybersecurity and secure online financial transactions

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[1] https://data.census.gov/table?q=broadband+Internet+access&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B28008
[2] Bridging the Digital Divide in Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Communities in the South – Individual Digital Capital Survey Results, July 2022
http://srdc.msstate.edu/digital-divide/individual-digital-capcity-survey-report.pdf

Digital Volunteer Initiative Volunteer Development:

- Engaging diverse audiences
- Following a set of positive guidelines for meaningful, person-to-person interaction
- Encouraging participatory learning
- Addressing confidentiality and data safety concerns
- Helping volunteers understand that their work is about more than tech support; it's about building relationships

Digital Volunteer Expectations:

- Live in or near pockets of unserved and underserved communities
- Use "ready-to-go" lessons, additional resources, and one-on-one engagement to support digital skills learning;
- Complete training and work with Extension professionals and volunteers who will serve as leads in the Digital Volunteer Initiative in their respective communities
- Participate in regularly scheduled calls or meetings to support program sustainability
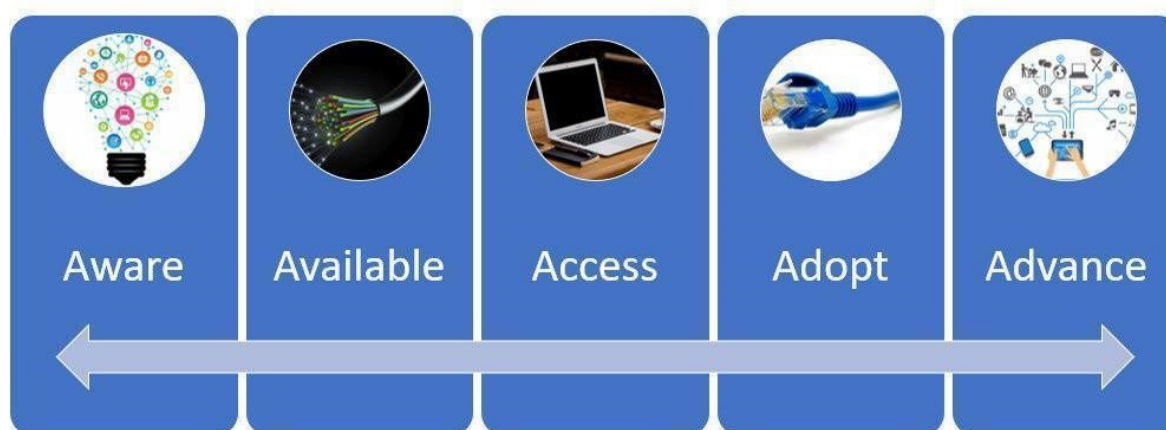
The Digital Access Infographic shows how digital access takes place along a continuum which includes these five components:

- **Aware**: Being aware of how broadband can be used as a resource, Communities and individuals must be aware of the potential before any steps to access will take place.
- **Available**: Having available broadband infrastructure in a community is vital to use by individuals and businesses.
- **Access**: Having a computing device capable of effectively providing access to the Internet is essential. Ideally, this means having a computer, not just relying on a Smart phone, which may make some Internet resources difficult to access.
- **Adopt**: Individuals must adopt broadband use to tap into its vast resources. Typically, this is done by subscribing to some type of service.
- **Advance**: Using broadband services to advance quality of life requires having the digital literacy skills to navigate the opportunities.

Image source: https://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/files/DigitalAccessContinuum_ExtensionRoles-Final-5-10-22.pdf

COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Understanding your community is essential in launching a Digital Volunteer Initiative. Investing time upfront in assessing the community will help you find volunteers, participants, partners, and funding (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). You can use Census data to collect information, such as demographic data, but more is needed to understand your community fully (Teuteberg & Cummins, 2017). This can be accomplished through a community assessment, which will reveal the needs and assets of a community. Here, we define needs as the gaps between what a community has and what would be optimal for the citizens, and assets are defined as things that improve the quality of life (Center for Community Health and Development, n.d.). An asset could be a person, a service, an organization or institution, or a business.

You may have conducted needs assessments before and have a general idea of what your community needs, e.g., Digital Volunteers. If you haven't identified the community's needs, a needs assessment can be accomplished in many ways, including focus groups, questionnaires, direct observations, and interviews. The needs of the community should inform your program planning and volunteer recruitment. Knowing the community's needs will also help inventory the community's assets.

Identifying assets can be as simple as interviewing community members to identify assets or drawing a map of the community. If you are interviewing groups or individuals to assess needs, you can inventory assets simultaneously. If that is not an option, you can collect this information as you collect needs (e.g., focus groups, interviews). Some of the questions you might ask are:
- Where do people gather in your community?
- Who are the leaders in your community?
- Are there any greenspaces, parks, or natural resources?
- What kinds of businesses exist in your community?
- What products are manufactured in your community?
- What governmental services are provided to your community?
- Are there any museums or visual or performing arts centers in your community?

A common method for inventorying assets is mapping the community's organizations (e.g., neighborhood associations, nonprofits, places of worship). Maps can be as simple as a hand-drawn sketch or a printed map. For communities defined by a geographic boundary, numerous online resources such as Google Earth can help identify organizations, businesses, and institutions (e.g., libraries, community centers, local government offices, and schools). Your asset map should also specify resources related to digital infrastructure and user adoption that currently exist (see community partnerships) to aid you in identifying gaps that a Digital Volunteer Initiative could help address.

The Action Plan Guide in the addendum contains a worksheet to help you organize your community data. Use this worksheet to list the assets identified in your map, and to add any other types of data (e.g., Census) you collected. This becomes an essential resource as you begin developing your Digital Volunteer Initiative.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering with non-profit organizations, government agencies, and businesses can enable the Digital Volunteer Initiative to expand outreach and services to the community. For the partnership to be effective it needs to be beneficial for both the Digital Volunteer Initiative and the partner.

Questions to consider:
- Do any community organizations already offer digital literacy education?
- Are any other local agencies interested in training Digital Volunteers or offering digital literacy education at their location?
- Where in the community could digital literacy education be offered?
  o Local non-profits or government agencies
  o Libraries
  o Community centers
  o Housing communities
- Which local agencies already provide services to your target populations, aging adults, job seekers, or individuals with disabilities?

Brainstorm Activity:
Brainstorm a list of potential partners. During your brainstorm identify the partner, the benefit they will gain from getting involved in the project, and the project's benefit from including them. Remember that many times, partners are an entity such as an educational, governmental, non-profit, agricultural, or social/civic organization. They may also be specific people or a small business within the community. You can use the ***Designing a Win- Win Partnership*** worksheet in the appendix to help organize your thoughts.

Ideas to help start your brainstorm:
- Who could help drive adult participants to your training?
- Who in your community is already knowledgeable on these topics?
- Who might have access to other resources you need to launch a Digital Volunteer Initiative?

You should always be aware of any potential conflicts, etc. related to partnerships. Remember that all university policies and guidelines should be followed.

Potential Partner — How will they benefit? — How will we benefit? — Digital Volunteer Initiative
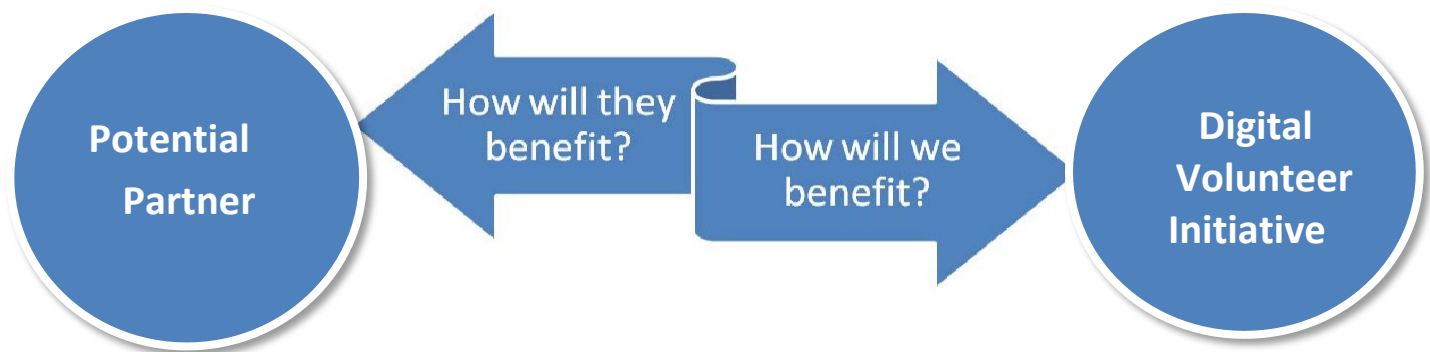
DIGITAL VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE DELIVERY MODELS

There is no one-size-fits-all method of addressing individual and community needs around digital inclusion. The following examples are provided to help Extension teams explore what is feasible and appropriate to help reduce barriers to digital adoption. Your Digital Volunteer Initiative may ultimately implement more than one delivery model.

What is a digital volunteer?

Although the term volunteer is used throughout this guide, Extension programs may utilize these tools to evaluate their community needs, resources and delivery models and develop a program that offers compensation to those delivering services. Extension teams may wish to explore salaries, stipends, AmeriCorps service, work-study, and other available programs to determine if compensation would help program sustainability.

Whether paid or unpaid, a digital volunteer is a trusted source within the community to support individuals in accessing, adopting, and using the internet, online tools, and internet-enabled devices to meet their personal needs.

Virtual programming delivery

Volunteering through technology (on a computer or handheld device) can expand your volunteer pool by allowing individuals to engage from wherever they may be and reduce place-based barriers for potential volunteers. Considerations for including virtual volunteers in your program include additional technology and training that may be needed to successfully deliver technical support or skills training via the phone or computer.

Example programming delivery could include:
- Free tech support hotline for digital learning and information through one-on-one phone assistance. Individuals can call or text a phone line for immediate assistance or to request a call back when a volunteer is available or at the preference of the requestor. Email can also be provided as an additional method to initiate contact with a virtual volunteer.
- Allowing for online scheduling of appointments/repeated tech tutoring sessions with a virtual volunteer.
- Development of tech videos to allow individuals to troubleshoot solutions to common tech or device issues they may be experiencing.

In-person programming delivery
- One-on-one program delivery
- Pair or team program delivery
- Group settings

Example programming delivery could include:
- Cross-training staff or volunteers who already work in Extension, social service agencies, libraries, health and more who offer guidance to community members to extend their efforts to help deliver digital skills training and resources
- Extension Instructor led training
- Face-to-face interactions
- One-shot volunteer opportunities to address a specific need/topic

Things to consider when selecting program delivery options:

- **Service area and target audience:** Who are you trying to serve? Is the program defined by geographic boundaries or target populations?

- **Community resources:** Where can you connect with the identified audiences to meet them where they are? How does this knowledge of community gathering locations and information sources influence how you might engage volunteers and deliver programming?

- **Volunteer and participant safety:** Meeting people where they are could include offering technical training and support in a participant's home. This helps reduce barriers for individuals with disabilities, caretakers, and aging adults. Online interactions also expand methods for delivering information and training.
  However, the development of policies, procedures, and volunteer training helps to reduce risk to both volunteers and participants. These plans should include how to handle and report interactions with minors. For volunteers working in virtual spaces, training on appropriate online interactions, appropriate spaces for meeting one-on-one virtually, and maintaining professional boundaries will better prepare them for engaging online.

- **University policy:** Review your university policies and training on these subjects and determine if additional tools need to be implemented.

- <u>**Extension example**</u>: One state's program allows for home visits; however, a pair of volunteers of differing gender identities must be present the entire time. They complete training and follow all procedures to reduce the potential risk to volunteers or participants. **Protecting an individual's well-being, personal identifiable information (PII) and privacy:** A Digital Volunteer is a trusted role as they work to support individuals with their digital and technology needs. It is important to implement background checks and procedures to help reduce the risk to a volunteer, a program participant, and the university. No matter the Digital Volunteer delivery model and strategies implemented to avoid exposure to personal identifiable information and private or confidential information, it's likely a volunteer will be privy to some information. With the many concerns over online privacy and the potential for scams, providing volunteer training on cybersecurity aspects for both volunteers and program participants is vital. Including how to handle personal information they may be exposed to and how to help the user understand the need to keep passwords, banking information, and PII confidential. Additionally, Extension teams may consider including additional health and well-being content in their volunteer training, such as mental health resources or violence intervention actions. Should supporting someone with their digital access needs result in a volunteer being concerned about an individual's well-being, they'll be better prepared to act and refer resources.

Evaluating adequate resources when selecting a volunteer delivery method

As you consider which delivery method may be implemented, think about what you would need to provide to support that delivery format.

The *Digital Volunteer Initiative: Resource Needs* table in the addendum lists resources commonly used to assist in launching a Digital Volunteer Initiative. Identifying where access to resources is currently available and what additional resources may be needed will guide in developing a program budget.

FORMING AND TRAINING DIGITAL VOLUNTEER TEAMS

Planning Recruitment
The Digital Volunteer Initiative will need a coordinator or educator to manage the program as well as Digital Volunteers who could be recruited from the local community and through community partnerships.

Recruitment could include:

- Educators
- IT professionals
- Other professionals
- Retirees
- Young adults looking to gain professional experience
- 4-H youth and other students

Recruitment Considerations:
- Will volunteers primarily teach set classes where they can become experts in the material?
- Will volunteers need more expertise if they are helping participants one-to-one on a myriad of topics?
- Will community members participate as volunteers?
- Are volunteers affiliated with or employed by partner organizations?
- Who will train and supervise volunteers?
- Who will connect the public seeking services to the volunteers?

Note that not all volunteers will have the same expertise or comfort level with various kinds of technology or have teaching experience, so planning a comprehensive volunteer training program that includes technical training will help prepare Digital Volunteers.

Defining Program Roles
Below are roles that may be useful in designing your Digital Volunteer Initiative.

Program Coordinator/Educator
The Digital Volunteer Initiative coordinator/educator of the volunteer team could develop partnerships, expand the curriculum, coordinate community outreach and educational opportunities, produce marketing materials, train volunteers, complete program reporting, and educate the community much like a Digital Volunteer.

Digital Volunteers
Digital Volunteers can teach classes and individuals, provide remote tech support, meet the public at outreach events, and lead information sessions on community and government resources. Some volunteers, especially working professionals or those with IT expertise, might prefer to lead a one-time training or assist more behind the scenes, such as being a resource to other volunteers or in creating educational materials.

Student Volunteers
By establishing a relationship with local colleges and universities, students could be recruited to provide digital education or support program data collection and analysis. Local high schools may have service hour requirements that students could fulfill as Digital Volunteers.

Note: Sample position descriptions are located on the Digital Volunteer Initiative website.

Professional Development of Digital Volunteers

Initial and ongoing training is important because not all volunteers will have the same level of experience teaching or tutoring, nor will they have the same experiences and competencies in using various digital technologies.

Training Considerations:
- Will there be a Digital Volunteer Initiative educator or coordinator who could train volunteers?
  - Technical Training e.g. curriculum training and basic digital literacy skills, problem solving strategies.
  - Teacher Training e.g. prepping for success, engaging, supporting learners, and evaluating learning.
  - Soft Skills Training e.g. active listening, de-escalation techniques, and maintaining boundaries.
- Will an outside person to train new volunteers be hired? If yes, how often could training feasibly occur?
  - If an outside tech trainer is hired, will there be any technical support after the training?
- Will additional educational materials be created to support local needs in addition to those provided through the Digital Volunteer Initiative? If so, could the creator of these materials provide technical training and support?
- How will ongoing professional development be offered? For example:
  - New volunteers could shadow a coordinator or experienced volunteers.
  - Training on special needs could be presented in the community.
  - Local experts can serve as guest speakers (Examples: online resources for those seeking employment, cybersecurity, telehealth, online banking)

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Being able to communicate the aggregate story of this project's success is important in lifting up the value Extension brings to the work of digital literacy. Thus, tools to measure impact are included in this packet, and participating states are encouraged to use them and to respond to calls for gathering data for national impact statements.

One of the main goals of this effort is to improve quality of life among residents as they begin exploring the resources available through the Internet. Below are the short, medium, and long-term impacts anticipated through this work:

Outcomes

Short term:
- Extension advances knowledge and skills on how to identify and organize community stakeholders to promote digital literacy.
- Extension expands capacity to advance digital literacy.
- Community learners gain knowledge and skills related to digital literacy.

Medium term:
- Volunteers become more comfortable in training community members on different digital technologies and skills.
- Community learners apply new digital skills gained to access new digital resources.
- Extension designs a plan to sustain efforts in the future.

Long term:
- Extension expands reach (new audiences, new program delivery) through use of new digital skills and resources.
- Community learners advance quality of life by applying digital knowledge and skills gained.

Tools to Aid in Evaluation
- Post session survey for participants
- 3-month follow up survey for participants
- Digital Volunteer/Presenter survey
- Site/partner survey

Additional Possible Evaluation Tools
- Post class/tutoring surveys
- Pre- and post-surveys for formal classes
- Follow-up group interviews
- Participant journals or logs
- Photo documentation or videos
- Case studies/success stories
- Portfolios for participant work
  - Example: resume and cover letter created during a class series

Data to Consider Tracking
- When and where are services offered
- Time spent per session
- Number of new participants versus repeat customers
- Devices used during sessions
- Skill taught
- Participant satisfaction of service and perception of own learning and success
- Participant demographics
- How participants hear about the program
- How participants contact the program
- Volunteer/presenter satisfaction of program support
- Volunteer/presenter perception of participant learning and session success
- Perception of program services and success held by partnering agencies and locations where program services are provided
- Success stories

Sharing Successes

Sharing success will help you to grow your program's impact by attracting more participants and volunteers, creating new partnerships, and raising awareness about how the Digital Volunteer Initiative is impacting your community.

First, identify what success you would like to share, then decide what action you want your story to inspire. Now that you have identified the target audience and your story outline, where is the best place to share your success to accomplish your goal?

Here are a few ideas:
- Invite a local journalist to write a story on the impact of your initiative and share all upcoming class dates.
- Post on social media about the success of a participant and how they are putting their new skills to use. (Be sure to follow university photo use and image release policies.)
- Present to your local Chamber of Commerce about the benefits of the Digital Volunteer Initiative to your community's overall workforce and economic opportunities and ask for partners to host training at their location.

Participation and Data Protection

As you develop assessment plans, think about issues of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and data protection. If you are considering presentation or publication of results, it is good practice to consult with your university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data collection.

RESOURCES

DIGITAL ACCESS CONTINUUM

Digital access takes place along a continuum which includes these five components:
- **Aware**: Being aware of how broadband can be used as a resource, Communities and individuals must be aware of the potential before any steps to access will take place.
- **Available**: Having available broadband infrastructure in a community is vital to use by individuals and businesses.
- **Access**: Having a computing device capable of effectively providing access to the Internet is essential. Ideally, this means having a computer, not just relying on a Smart phone, which may make some Internet resources difficult to access.
- **Adopt**: Individuals must adopt broadband use to tap into its vast resources. Typically, this is done by subscribing to some type of service.
- **Advance**: Using broadband services to advance quality of life requires having the digital literacy skills to navigate the opportunities.

Digital Access Continuum Infographic:
https://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/files/DigitalAccessContinuum_ExtensionRoles-Final-5-10-22.pdf

DIGITAL VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE TRAINING RESOURCES

To access the lessons below, please visit the Digital Volunteer Initiative landing page: https://srdc.msstate.edu/digital-literacy

The National Digital Extension Education Team (NDEET) and its partners have identified a set of training materials to support this effort. These are noted below. Feel free to access, use, or adapt, but we do ask that you maintain the authorship on materials you use. Feel free to add your own logos to share within the local context.

Digital Volunteer Initiative Lessons: These lessons were developed specifically with this project in mind based on a national survey of digital skill needs across Extension programming.

4-H Tech Changemaker Lessons: The Digital Volunteer Initiative was given permission by 4-H National Council to share lessons developed for use in the 4-H Tech Changemaker initiative. Like those above, if you choose to use these lessons, please maintain the 4-H credit.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orleans County Lessons: Cornell Cooperative Extension in cooperation with partners developed a set of lessons on digital literacy, which they have made available for use in this project.

Digital Literacy Toolkit: This tool explores free, credible lessons available from outside sources. The toolkit can help you identify lessons that you may need that are not part of the core curriculum developed for this project. These can be used for personal learning, one-on-one assistance, or group lessons.

Digital Literacy Survey Findings: To explore the survey findings, visit the above landing page.

Broadband Access & Digital Skills Community of Practice Resource Repository: This community of practice through Extension Foundation is available to join as well as provides a link to the Extension Foundation's Resource Repository. The repository has a tab (keywords) specifically applied to this type of work.
https://connect.extension.org/g/broadband-access-and-digital-skills

DIGITAL ACCESS, INCLUSION, AND LITERACY RESOURCES

Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion continuously evolves as technology advances. Intentional strategies and investments are needed to reduce the historical, institutional, and structural barriers to the access and use of technology. The dimensions of digital inclusion include:

1. Affordable, robust broadband Internet service,
2. Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user,
3. Access to digital literacy training,
4. Quality technical support, and
5. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration
(Source: National Digital Inclusion Alliance, https://www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions/).

Digital Literacy

The American Library Association (ALA) defines digital literacy as "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills."

The Digital Volunteer Initiative addresses digital literacy training and quality technical support by empowering volunteer teams to teach basic digital literacy skills such as safe and effective Internet searches, online interaction, and computer/digital device basics. Another way to consider digital literacy is through a "Digital Skills Framework," updated in April 2019 by the Department for Education of the UK government that defines basic foundational skills such as being able to:

- Turn on a device
- Use the available controls on my device
- Make use of accessibility tools on a device to make it easier to use
- Interact with the home screen on a device
- Understand that the Internet allows one to access information and content and that a person can connect to it through Wi-Fi
- Connect a device to a safe and secure Wi-Fi network
- Connect to the Internet and open a browser to find and use websites
- Understand that passwords and personal information need to be kept safely as they have value to others
- Update and change a password when prompted to do so

Volunteers could also be trained to be advocates for sharing the importance of broadband with local leaders and stakeholders, with the aim of influencing community decisions regarding strengthening infrastructure, access, and partnerships for Internet service. The Digital Volunteer Initiative can play a key role in preparing communities with the skills needed when access is available.

BROADBAND AND DIGITAL ACCESS DATA SOURCES
FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING

American Community Survey Data on Computer and Internet Use, U.S. Census Bureau Background:

https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/computer/

Data access: See dropdown search options from site above, or visit https://data.census.gov/

Levels of geography: Census tract five-year estimates, county five-year estimates (some one-year estimates, depending on population size), and state one and five-year estimates

Digital Equity Act Population Viewer, U.S. Census Bureau

Background: https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/digital-equity-act-population-viewer.html; https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html

Data access: Draws from the American Community Survey mentioned above, but in useful interactive app - https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42

Also scroll down on this website to easy to download files on "Covered Populations" under the Digital Equity Act (https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html)

Levels of geography: County, state

Broadband Availability and Speed, Federal Communications Commission

Background: https://www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData

Data access: https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/home

Levels of geography: Address specific, some places (cities/towns), county

NTIA Public GIS Data, National Telecommunications and Information Administration Background:
https://nbam.ntia.gov/pages/open-data

Data access: Use link above and search among several data types

State-Level Resources

Many states have data sites that they have developed that may be useful. One avenue for finding additional resources for a specific state can be found at https://nbam.ntia.gov/pages/open-data (NTIA Public GIS Data, listed above)

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OTHER RESOURCES

Connect Arizona Digital Navigators , a model of utilizing a free tech support hotline for digital learning and information.

Digital Navigator Model through the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

Missouri Digital Ambassadors, a digital curriculum for volunteer training through University of Missouri Extension.

National 4-H Tech Changemakers, with a guidebook, lessons, and marketing materials to engage 4-H teens in developing and delivering tech skills training in their local communities.

ACTION PLAN GUIDE

This action plan guides you as you plan, implement, and evaluate your Digital Volunteer Initiative.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Before implementing your Digital Volunteer Initiative, it is important to learn more about your community. This exercise is designed to help you learn more about the place you will be implementing the program, regardless of your skills or prior knowledge. Using credible sources of information, complete the community profile below. These sources could include local government officials, the Board of Commissioners, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the State Department of Labor, your local Chamber of Commerce, etc. (See Broadband and Digital Access Data Sources for Community in the Digital Volunteer Initiative Guidebook.)

When citing published statistics and population data, be sure to indicate the source, as well as the year in which the data were published. For example, although the Bureau of Labor Statistics may publish information in 2020, the data may actually represent 2018. You may also want to include the URL for referencing later if needed.

Basic County Information

State		County	
County Seat		Cities or Towns in the County	
Location of Extension Office:			

Population

Total Population:		Unemployed:	
Employed:		Unemployment Rate	
Over the last 10 years, has the population in your community increased or decreased?		Over the last 10 years, has the unemployment rate in your community increased or decreased?	
Source of Information:			

Digital Equity Act (DEA) Covered Populations

Percent of population of individuals who live in covered households (i.e. households with income less than or equal to 150 percent of the federal poverty level)	
Percent of population of aging individuals	
Percent of population of incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a federal correctional facility	
Percent of population of veterans	
Percent of population of individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners and have low levels of literacy	
Percent of population of individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group:	
Percent of population of individuals who primarily reside in a rural area:	
Data Source:	

Education of Labor Force

What percentage of the total workforce has some high school education?	
What percentage of the total workforce has a high school diploma or GED?	
What percentage of the total workforce attended college but did not graduate?	
What percentage of the total workforce attended a 2-year or 4-year college program and graduated?	
What percentage of the total workforce completed a graduate degree beyond a 4-year college program?	
Data Source:	

Education Systems

Your community has different educational systems – public/private schools, career/technical colleges, academic universities, libraries, etc. List the different educational systems below and describe each.

Level of Education (i.e. K-12, High School, College)	Name of School	Location	Number of students

Employers

Identify four employers in your community. Answer each of the questions below for each employer:

- How many people do they employ?
- Where are they located in your community?
- Does the employer produce goods (agriculture, forestry, mining, construction, manufacturing, etc.), or does the employer provide services (utilities, wholesale trade, retail, transportation, education, healthcare, etc.)?
- What goods do they produce? What services do they provide?
- Is the employer part of the private or public sector? If the employer is part of the government, is it the federal, state, or local government?

Employer #1:	
Number of Employees:	
Location:	
Goods or Services?	
Description:	
Private or Government?	

Employer #2:	
Number of Employees:	
Location:	
Goods or Services?	
Description:	
Private or Government?	

Employer #3:	
Number of Employees:	
Location:	
Goods or Services?	
Description:	
Private or Government?	

Employer #4:	
Number of Employees:	
Location:	
Goods or Services?	
Description:	
Private or Government?	

Source(s) of Information:

SITUATION STATEMENT

Looking back at the needs assessment, write a situation statement about the needs you have identified in relation to economic mobility and digital inclusion in your community. Try keeping your situation statement to 500 words or less. Consider these guiding questions:

- What is the community concern that could be addressed by advancing digital skills in the community?
- What causes the concern?
- For whom (individual, household, group, community, society in general) does this concern exist? Are certain groups more impacted than others?
- Who has a stake in the situation? Who cares whether it is addressed or not?
- What do we know about the people who are involved? What research and experience do we have?

DESIGNING A WIN-WIN PARTNERSHIP

Create a list of potential partners. Identify the partner, the benefit they will gain from getting involved in the project, and the project's benefit from including them.

POTENTIAL PARTNER	THEIR BENEFIT	YOUR BENEFIT

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Within your community, there are probably organizations, associations, people, etc. that would be considered assets/ideal partners for a Digital Volunteer Initiative. For example, the local high school might have a college dual-enrollment program; the state labor department might have a regional office located in your community; and a Chamber of Commerce or economic development board may also exist. What assets do you have that could be beneficial for your Digital Volunteer Initiative? Some categories are listed below, but feel free to add or change these to fit your community.

Space
Cash
Helpers
Equipment
Materials
Expertise

DIGITAL VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE RESOURCE NEEDS

Below are some potential resources you may need for your initiative. Feel free to adapt this to fit your situation.

Needs	Who provides?	Cost
Equipment		
Telephone/Cell phone lines (dedicated #s, hotlines, stipends for volunteer use of personal lines)		
Email		
Internet		
Desktop/laptops/tablets/smartphones		
Hotspots		
Human Resources		
Paid positions		
Volunteer positions		
Operating		
Volunteer training or paid training		
Marketing (website, social media, print, radio, tv)		
Training materials (both volunteer training and development and delivery of handouts, videos & digital resources for program implementation.		
Office/event/workshop supplies		
Interpretation and translation services		
Reimbursement/stipends (Examples: mileage, personal Internet or cell phone use for service)		

(Adapted from Digital Navigator Playbook)

VOLUNTEER & PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Using your community asset chart, list the organizations that you can contact to recruit Digital Volunteers and participants. What are some of the pitches that could be used to recruit volunteers?

Consider these guiding questions:
- Who could help drive participants to your program?
- Who in your community is already knowledgeable on digital literacy and digital skills?
- Who might have access to other resources you need like a meeting space/community gathering place?

Organization	Volunteer Recruitment	Participant Recruitment	Other Resources

Volunteer Skills Inventory

As a member of the Digital Volunteer Initiative, you are an important part of the team. Similar to a sports team, each member has certain strengths and skills that contribute to the overall success of the program. We want to build a team of volunteers with diverse strengths, skills, and aspirations to create an effective team.
Mark the appropriate box for each statement:

Statement	Yes	Somewhat	No
I am comfortable completing basic digital skills, e.g. texting, emailing, using the internet & social media, formatting documents, etc.			
I feel comfortable using a Windows computer and Microsoft Office Suite.			
I am comfortable using Android mobile devices, as well as various tablets, e-readers, and wearable devices.			
I am comfortable using Apple products and iWork productivity tools.			
I am comfortable using a Chromebook and Google Workspace tools.			
I have a problem-solving mindset, and I can help someone with a problem or device that I've never encountered before.			
I feel comfortable admitting I don't know an answer or that I can't figure something out and need to get help.			
I would be interested in volunteering behind the scenes.			
I want to develop my own tech skills.			
I have the soft skills I need to teach and empower others, e.g. active listening skills, empathy, diversity mindset, strong communication skills			

Examples of guiding questions while meeting with someone who wants to become a Digital Volunteer:

- What talents or skills do you have that would help you be successful teaching digital skills to others?
- How would you explain how the internet works?
- What are some skills you want to learn as part of the Digital Volunteer Initiative?
- Have you ever taught something? Can you give an example of what you taught and how you approached teaching it?

COMMUNICATING IMPACT

Outcomes and Evaluations

Reminder: Tools for evaluating this work are on the Digital Volunteer Initiative website.

Who will be responsible for documenting the outcomes of the Digital Volunteer Initiative? What strategies will you use as a team to review this information? Do your evaluation questions address the needs identified in your needs assessment? How often will you synthesize information for project review?

Project Story-telling

What are your plans to share about the Digital Volunteer Initiative?

Project Reflection

How will you incorporate a reflection process into your Digital Volunteer Initiative?