Louisville'sDigitalInclusionPlan

Louisville's Digital Inclusion Plan recommends ways to remove barriers to success for our citizens who all need the digital access, skills and hardware to obtain jobs, earn degrees, and participate in society.

Why is this important?

Today, participation in society relies on the ability to access and use the internet effectively. Whether applying for a job, doing homework, or starting a business, all our residents need digital skills, tools, and connectivity to fully participate in modern society. These factors are increasingly becoming the choke points that prevent thousands of our citizens from adapting to and accessing the benefits of a knowledge-driven, innovative economy.

First and foremost, our citizens need access to broadband infrastructure. Our citizens also need digital skills; the vast majority of current and future job openings will require basic computer skills. According to a report from Capital One and Burning Glass Technologies, 78% of middle-skill jobs require digital skills.[1] Our citizens need devices that will let them harness the full potential of the internet; mobile devices cannot replicate the full range of necessary activities of a computer. Those lacking the access, skills and hardware necessary to participate in the global economy are being left behind. And that gap will only continue to widen as our world continues to push more and more of modern life online.

79% of people looking for jobs used the internet, a higher percentage than those who leaned on personal connections or networking.[2]

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79%ofpeoplelookingforjobsusedtheinternet,…

1. Kang, Cecilia. "Court Backs Rules Treating Internet as a Utility, Not Luxury." The New York Times. The New York Times Company, 14 June 2016. Web. 7 July 2016.

2. Crunched by the Numbers: The Digital Skills Gap in the Workforce. Burning Glass Technologies and Capital One. March 2015.

3. Smith, Aaron. "Searching for Work in the Digital Era." Pew Research Center Internet, Science, & Tech. Pew Research Center, 19 Nov. 2015. Web. 7 July 2016.

This digital inclusion plan provides the first steps toward eliminating the digital divide in Louisville.

On a more granular level, 50% of African-American internet users surveyed by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies said the internet was "very important" to them successfully finding a job, compared to 36% for the entire 1,600 US residents surveyed in the representative study.[3] Although more and more people are relying on the internet to find employment, the people most in need are often least able to access broadband, a speed considered the baseline standard for internet access. Based on Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and Census Bureau data, the Center for Public Integrity found neighborhoods with median household incomes below $34,800 are five times more likely not to have access to broadband than households in neighborhoods with median incomes of about $80,700, meaning broadband is not even available for them to purchase regardless of cost.[5]

We see this fact play out in "fiber deserts" in neighborhoods in west and southwest Louisville, which also have our highest unemployment rates. These previously unrelated issues of employment and broadband access are now intertwined and are most likely, based on research, affecting outcomes for our citizens. This is just one example of how the digital divide is impacting our community today; the same plotline plays out in other key facets of life, like education and access to government services. The stories and characters may differ, but the end result is the same.

The challenges the digital divide presents are dramatically affecting outcomes for our community today. Without action, we will continue to limit socio-economic mobility in our community and may hold back whole segments of our society from reaching their highest potential. This digital inclusion plan provides the first steps toward eliminating the digital divide in Louisville.

4.Horrigan, John B. Broadband and Jobs. Washington: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2013. Oct. 2013. Web. Page 1.

5. Holmes, Allen, Eleanor Bell Fox, Ben Wieder, and Chris Zubak-Skees. "Rich People Have Access to High-Speed Internet; Many Poor People Still Don't." The Center for Public Integrity. The Center for Public Integrity, 12 May 2016. Web. 7 July 2016.

Our Goals

Louisville Metro is using the Digital Inclusion Plan to pursue Mayor Fischer's larger strategic planning goals for our region in a few ways - especially when it comes to jobs, education, and being a more compassionate city.

Jobs: (Goals 7, 9, and 19)

Job growth is important to our whole region. But it's not enough to say you're going to create jobs—we want to create high-wage, creative jobs and inspire the curious, active citizens of Louisville. We're focusing on these high-wage jobs to improve economic outcomes, especially in West Louisville. Louisvillians also need to have technical know-how and computer access to apply for jobs. To achieve these goals, the Digital Inclusion Plan is going to help close gaps in skills and hardware.

Education: (Goal 8)

You can't talk about job creation and workforce development without talking about education. The Digital Inclusion Plan is going to support Mayor Fischer's Cradle to Cradle initiative so that no matter what age, Louisvillians get the training they need to compete in our 21st century economy.

Compassion: (Goals 15 and 21)

In Louisville, we show our compassion through hundreds of thousands of acts each year. Our commitment to digital equity is also a commitment to compassion in service delivery to our community. By making connectivity possible for everyone in Louisville, we'll enable our citizens to work at higher-wage jobs and access government services they could not otherwise.

Strategic Focus Areas

Louisville will address the digital divide via three key strategic focus areas:

IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY: Expand access to the internet and broadband infrastructure for our entire community.

TEACHING DIGITAL SKILLS: Train residents in digital skills to increase their employability and ability to participate in society.

PROVIDING HARDWARE: Work with partners to provide technology and technical support to residents in need.

Areas of Focus

Introduction

We're making digital inclusion a priority in all of Louisville's neighborhoods—especially those in historically underserved areas. Today, participation in society relies on our ability to access and use the internet effectively. As more and more of modern life moves online, the gap between the digital haves and have-nots will only continue to widen. These divides mirror racial, socio-economic, and geographic inequities in our community and nation as a whole.

In order for Louisville to tap all of our region's unrecognized potential, we need to have a comprehensive response to digital inequity. Our focus areas help us organize our projects and partnerships as we move ahead.

Focus Areas

1. IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY

To achieve digital inclusion, all citizens must be able to access affordable, convenient, reliable, fast, and full (not exclusively mobile) internet access. The problem is partly about infrastructure and partly about affordability. Internet access should be available in Louisville in the same way as water or electricity.

OUR CHALLENGES

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

The more you earn, the more likely you are to have fast, reliable internet access at home. Digital inclusion means that those who most need access to better-paying jobs would have the same fast, reliable internet as those who already make $75,000 or more. Improving connectivity can help address other economic divides.

HOME INTERNET SUBSCRIPTION BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Less than $20,000	58.6%
$20,000 to $74,000	29.1%
$75,000 or more	8.3%

RACIAL DISPARITIES

Different racial groups have differing levels of access to the internet at home.

HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT INTERNET BY RACE

White   8.3%
Black 24.4%
Asian   4.6%
Hispanic 13.6%

EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES

There is also a digital divide in terms of education—if you hold a bachelor's degree, you're 50% more likely to have access to broadband internet at home than someone who does not have a high school diploma.

HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT A BROADBAND SUBSCRIPTION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

LessthanaHighSchoolDegree 41.6%
High School Degree 72.6%
Bachelors Degree or Higher 90.1%

GOAL: Increase home internet access 15% by 2022

2018 GOAL: Connect 500 families to the internet

WHAT WE'RE DOING TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS:

- Crowdsourcing internet speeds across our community via Speed Up Louisville
  Speed Up Louisville measures internet speeds in Louisville, allowing us to track and improve performance through key policies and partnerships.

- Making public Wi-Fi available with Market Street Wi-Fi
  Through the Market Street Wi-Fi project, 24/7 internet access is available to the public at locations along Market Street in West Louisville. The project offers connectivity to residents in a low-access area.

- Extending broadband access at the Louisville Free Public Library
  Over 63,000 users per month access public computers at the LFPL branches, especially in lower-income neighborhoods.

- Making Wi-Fi available at community centers.
  At community centers in West Louisville, roughly 900 GB are transferred each month on the public networks.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Engage ISPs and utilities to address equity
- Work with Community Partners to sign eligible families up for low-cost home internet plans
- Ensure public buildings serve as service backstops

2. TEACHING DIGITAL SKILLS:

Train residents in digital skills to increase their employability and ability to participate in modern society.

WE THINK OF DIGITAL SKILLS IN THREE RESPECTS:

- Training citizens to be digitally literate
- Making sure residents are equipped for "middle-skill jobs" and opportunities in professional/office environments
- Teaching advanced-level programming classes.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE:

"Fundamentally, even if tech is second nature, a lot of young people need to understand it's not just for social media and gaming. This is about careers, wealth building, and challenging people to leverage tech more comprehensively to improve their quality of life."

> – Jeana Dunlap, Louisville Office of Redevelopment Strategy

OUR CHALLENGES:

78% of "middle skill" jobs—those requiring more education than a high school diploma, but less than a 4-year degree—also require applicants to have solid digital skills.

Most job postings are now online, and every part of pursuing work requires computers and internet access. Nearly 80% of job seekers who looked for employment in the last 2 years used the internet, more than those who leaned on personal connections or networking.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE:

'It's hard enough to apply for a well-paying job online, but even at entry-level positions like fast food services, gone are the days of turning in a paper application.'

> – Chike Aguh, CEO of the non-profit EveryoneOn.org

A survey conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies found that African Americans are more likely than average to rely on the internet for job search and to say the internet was very important to landing a job. Of particular interest: African Americans are relying on social media and mobile devices for job search at higher rates than the general population.

The survey found 50% of African American internet users said the internet was very important to them in successfully finding a job—a significantly higher number than the 36% average of all respondents.

2018 GOAL: Make sure our all of our workforce is prepared for modern and future jobs
Provide comprehensive training to 200 residents needing improved digital skills

WHAT WE'RE DOING TO ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS:

- Supporting the Code Louisville initiative
  Every 90 days, there are around 100 unfilled junior software development opportunities open in the Louisville Metro area. Code Louisville offers software development tracks, totaling 24 weeks, for adults who want to pursue a new career—at no cost to students. People can participate in Code Louisville in 3 ways: as students, as teaching mentors, or as hiring companies interested in bringing on our newly-trained talent.

- Beech Tech is an exciting program that brings coding to Louisville's youth. Building off of the success of Code Louisville, in 2014 a pilot group of 7 high schoolers launched their own startup with support from the Code Louisville program. Beech Tech isn't just about learning valuable digital skills—it's also an opportunity to work with mentors and learn entrepreneurial skills. Since that first group in 2014, Beech Tech has expanded, with 3 teams working on web development and marketing projects. We're looking to expand the program in the future.

- Supporting Programming at the Louisville Free Public Library
  Some residents may be proud owners of a new laptop—but not know how to use the software on their device, or need to work on building digital literacy skills for jobs in offices, or to create resumes. This is where the LFPL comes in, offering classes ranging from "Internet Basics" to "Resume Help". LFPL also offers free access to Lynda.com, a premier online learning resource that offers more than 3,400 courses about technical skills, creative techniques, business strategies, and other topics. LFPL programs are free to anyone with a library card, thanks to a grant through the Office of Performance Improvement and Innovation.
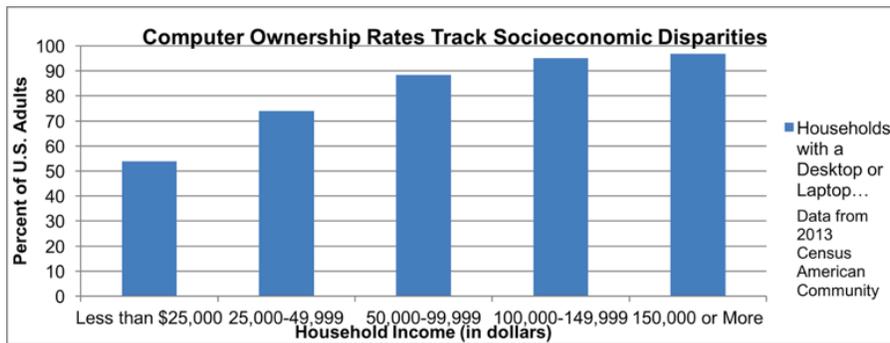
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Establish an inventory of local digital literacy efforts
- Explore opportunities to create digital presence for vulnerable populations
- Facilitate an expansion of digital skills course offerings
- Encourage development of employment-focused digital skills training programs

3. PROVIDING HARDWARE:

Work with partners to provide technology and technical support to in-need residents.

Louisville citizens need adequate and affordable hardware, assistive technology and technical support for those devices. Gaps exist across racial and socioeconomic lines nationwide in terms of laptop and desktop ownership. To take advantage of job and community opportunities, all residents need reliable access to a computer, not just a smartphone.

Computer Ownership Rates Track Socioeconomic Disparities

Households with a Desktop or Laptop…

Data from 2013 Census American Community

OUR CHALLENGES:

HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT A COMPUTER BY RACE

White	10.6%
Black	17.0%
Hispanic	20.9%

HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT A COMPUTER BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employed	7.1%
Unemployed	12.6%
Out of Workforce	24.2%

2018 GOAL: Distribute 500 reliable computers to families without a computer

WHAT WE ARE DOING TO ACCOMPLISH THAT GOAL:

Working with Community Service clients to bring hot-spots and laptops into clients' homes
- This pilot project seeks to improve outcomes for select Community Services clients by increasing their access to technology and the internet. We have provided 15 Community Services clients in the Self-sufficiency program a mobile wifi hot-spot, with unlimited data, and a Google Chromebook for 12 months.

Looking for sustainable ways we can re-purpose used laptops from community partners
- We are exploring opportunities with internal and external partners to re-purpose used computers to families without a computer at home. Our goal is to partner with a non-profit that will receive, refurbish, and distribute computers to families in-need.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
- Encourage businesses to donate used devices to help bridge gap
- Find partners to create computer refurbishment and repair clinics
- Work with Government and Community Partners to get computers to in-need families

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