ONE NETWORK

Digital Equity Newsletter

November 2024

Welcome to One Network - This newsletter is an overview of the digital equity services offered by organizations like Literacy Minnesota and resources for those wanting to know more about digital equity.

What is digital equity? Well, to put it simply, digital equity can be described as having access to and an understanding of technology. This came about in the 1990s when cell phones and personal computers started becoming available. The problem - not everyone has the same access to these products and the education on how to use them. As you read the following article, you will get to see some of the work the government and community has put in to provide people with digital equity services.

Two questions for you to reflect on:
1. Some people use words other than digital equity. Do you like digital equity or have something else in mind?
2. Have you ever provided digital equity services in your daily life?

Covered within this issue:
- **Community Bulletin**
  - New Literacy MN services coming soon
  - Defining digital equity (Article)
- **Literacy MN Digital Literacy Services**
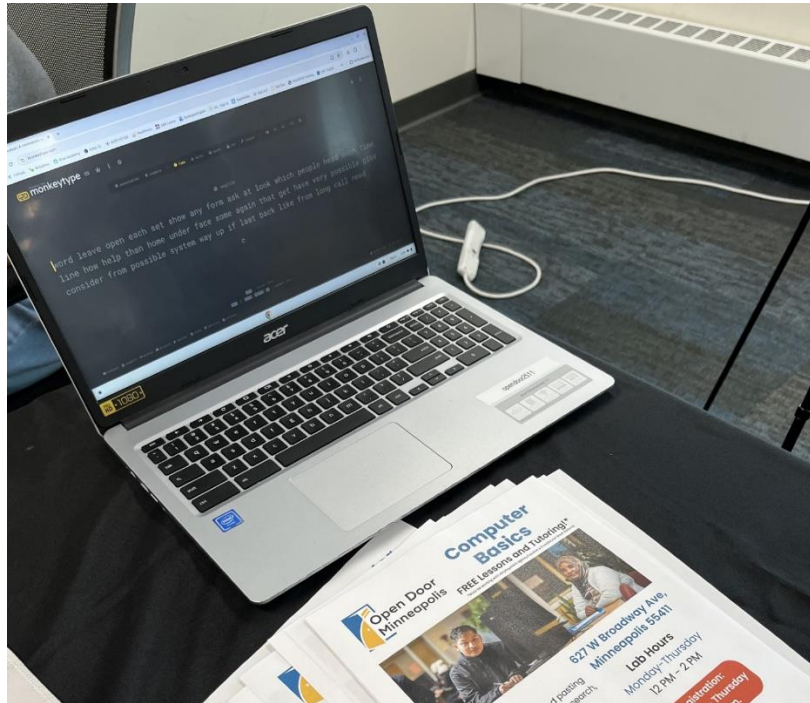- **Other Minnesota Initiatives**
- **Resources**

Literacy Minnesota

651-645-2277
https://www.literacymn.org/
700 Raymond Avenue Suite 180, Saint Paul, MN 55114

Mission: To share the power of learning through education, community building and advocacy.

Community Bulletin

Upcoming Opportunities with Literacy Minnesota

New Webinars
Literacy Minnesota will soon be partnering with Comcast to offer webinars on Best Practices for Providing Digital Navigation Services.

https://www.literacymn.org/trainings-workshops

Low-cost Internet Signup Days
We plan to start hosting a Comcast representative to help with signups for their low-cost internet option called Internet Essentials.

https://www.xfinity.com/learn/internet-service/internet-essentials

Lift Zone Program
Our organization is excited to share the news that two of our Open Door campuses, Minneapolis and St Paul, are now part of Comcast's Lift Zone Program.

https://corporate.comcast.com/impact/digital-equity/lift-zones

Stay tuned for more info!

What is Digital Equity?

We first saw reference to digital equity related topics in 1995 when the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) put out an article about the digital divide. As advances in technology started booming, this gap between those who have access to and an understanding of technology grew. By 2001, when a study coined the term digital equity, people began to recognize that something needed to be done about the problem.

Since these articles came out people have been working to close this digital access gap. All states are now required to have a plan in place for providing digital equity services to follow guidelines laid out by the Digital Equity Act first introduced in 2019 and made official in 2021. These services must include three parts - internet, devices and digital skills. This is often described as a three-legged stool and without one of the legs the other services aren't as useful.

Part of Minnesota's plan includes working with community organizations to provide services. The Office of Broadband Development calls these partners a Digital Connection Committee (DCC). These committees can be political subdivisions, tribes, non-profits, anchor institutions, faith-based organizations, Minnesota-based businesses, or just interested individuals. Minnesota had some focus areas to implement their plan including aging individuals, incarcerated individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with language barriers, individuals who primarily reside in a rural area and individuals of a low-income household. So, the idea was that committee could help provide services to one or more of these underserved communities.

Recent statistics from the 2022 Census are showing that we still have a lot of work to do. Majority of the US is still only around 80-85 percent covered with some states having little to no coverage at all. Funding is always the main problem when it comes to offering services like digital equity. The Digital Equity Act only had a five-year plan and we have already run out on plans like the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). You might be asking yourself, what's next?

There is hope with the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program and local grant funding. The Competitive Grant just closed so those who applied will get updates within the next year. As for Minnesotans specifically check on any grants coming from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) website. Anyone connected to education, housing, libraries, healthcare, workforce, nonprofit or other community support organizations please apply.

Article Definitions

Affordable Connectivity Program [FCC]
The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) was a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) benefit program that helped ensure that households could afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more.

Digital Connection Committee [DEED]
As the Office of Broadband Development develops the Digital Equity Plan to strategize improvements in internet affordability, access to internet-enabled devices, and access to digital skills training, Digital Connection Committees serve as key partners in ensuring the Plan reflects the goals and needs of all Minnesotans. Committees are voluntary workgroups which OBD is supporting

Digital Divide [NTIA]
The gap between people who have access to modern information and communications technology and those who don't.

Digital Equity [NDIA]
A condition in which 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. Sometimes called TEQuity/Tech Equity which is the shortening of technology equity.

Digital Literacy [NDIA]
The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

Digital Navigators [NDIA]
Trusted guides who assist community members with ongoing, individualized support for accessing affordable and appropriate connectivity, devices, and digital skills.

Article Sources

National Digital Inclusion Alliance
https://www.digitalinclusion.org/

Digital Equity Act website
https://www.digitalequityact.org/

Diversity for Social Impact – Digital Equity article
https://diversity.social/digital-equity/#:~:text=The%20term%20%E2%80%9Cdigital%20equity%E2%80%9D%20was%20first%20introduced%20in,with%20access%20to%20essential%20information%20and%20communication%20technology.%E2%80%9D

National Telecommunications and Information Administration
- https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED399126.pdf
- https://www.ntia.gov/federal-register-notice/2024/notice-funding-opportunity-digital-equity-competitive-grant-program

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Technology – Digital Access Divide article
https://tech.ed.gov/netp/digital-access-divide/

Digital Equity Act – State programs
https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/public-notice-posting-state-and-territory-bead-digital-equity

US Census - Digital Equity data
https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/05/mapping-digital-equity-in-every-state.html

Digital Connection Committee
https://mn.gov/deed/assets/digital-connection-committee-faq_tcm1045-563769.pdf

Affordable Connectivity Program
https://www.fcc.gov/acp

MN State website on Digital Opportunity
https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/adoption/

Our Digital Literacy Services

Digital equity requires access to devices, an internet connection, and digital skills. Below you can find how Literacy Minnesota is helping provide those services.
https://www.literacymn.org/digitalliteracy

Northstar Digital Literacy

The Northstar program assesses digital skills and provides classroom curriculum and self-directed online learning.

Website: https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/

Digital Equity and Navigation

Digital Navigators mentor individuals in using technology and help with getting low-cost internet. For more information on our services contact Susan at swbrandt@literacymn.org.
https://www.literacymn.org/digital-equity-navigation

Midway Location: 553 Fairview Ave N, Saint Paul, MN 55104
The Midway digital literacy lab at Goodwill-Easter Seals is coordinated by Manee Thao and open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Minneapolis Location: 627 W Broadway Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55411
Katey Miller works at the Minneapolis campus facilitating computer labs and Northstar digital literacy classes. The lab is open from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays.

Trainings and Workshops

We offer an assortment of programming for instructors that focus on digital literacy.
https://www.literacymn.org/digital-literacy-trainings-workshops

Other Initiatives in Minnesota

Neighborhood House

The Adult Education Program at Neighborhood House provides adult learners with ongoing educational support and learning opportunities. One of the areas of service they offer is digital literacy classes.

https://neighborhoodhousemn.org/

Lyndale Neighborhood Association

The Lyndale Education Program serves the residents of Horn Towers with literacy, language, and career skills. They created the ELDES curriculum to help address digital literacy gaps in English learners.

https://lyndale.org/

PCs for People

This is a nonprofit social enterprise working to get low-cost quality computers and internet into the homes of individuals, families, and nonprofits with low income.

https://www.pcsforpeople.org/

Office of Broadband Development

https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/

Helping Minnesotans understand broadband options available and work together to improve availability and use of high-speed broadband services.

Connectivity Blueprint

An initiative led by Ramsey County and Saint Paul to create a community-guided roadmap for achieving digital inclusion.

https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/projects-initiatives/ramsey-connected-computer-internet-resources/connectivity-blueprint

Technology Literacy Collaborative (TLC)

The TLC is a group of aspiring leaders in the digital equity field within the Twin Cities. They gather to problem solve and discuss best practices.

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14411564

Check out this newsletter's resource section on our website to see more local organizations.
https://www.literacymn.org/one-network-newsletter-resources

Resources

Digital Equity Act
https://www.digitalequityact.org/

National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)
https://www.digitalinclusion.org/

National Collaborative for Digital Equity (NCDE)
https://www.digitalequity.us/

National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
https://www.ntia.doc.gov/

NDIA's Important Words

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Digital Navigators
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Thanks for Sponsoring

More information here: https://www.literacymn.org/digital-equity-navigation#one-network-newsletter

Join the mailing list here: https://www.literacymn.org/one-network-signup

Questions, comments, or concerns? - Contact Frances Bates at fbates@literacymn.org.

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