

# Building Digital Communities Worksheet

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## Structure of the Framework

### Access Principles

Access principles address the infrastructure a community needs to have in place in order to provide opportunities to benefit from digital life.

- **Availability:** A reliable communications infrastructure is the raw material for innovation, growth, and competitive engagement in today's information-based world.
- **Affordability:** Access to the Internet needs to be affordable for communities and their members to benefit from the expanded opportunities of digital life.
- **Design for Inclusion:** People with disabilities, physical or cognitive differences, and differences in age-related capabilities, language, literacy or culture may face challenges using technology and participating in digital life.

#### Helpful TIPS:

The "Structure of the Framework" is quoted directly from the IMLS Framework for [Building Digital Communities](#). The Principles and Strategic Areas listed on page one and page two are key to implementing the ideas we'll discuss as part of this exercise toward a comprehensive, community-wide increase in digital inclusion.

### Adoption Principles

Adoption principles look to overcome individual barriers that make use of broadband technology less likely, even when access is available.

- **Public Access:** Public access to technology is necessary for community members who have little or no communication technology available in the home, need assistance to effectively use technology, or to supplement connectivity at home or in schools.
- **Relevance:** Beyond having access to technologies, individuals, businesses, and institutions need to understand the relevance and benefits of using technology to achieve educational, economic, and social goals.
- **Digital Literacy:** Digital literacy skills, including the ability to find, evaluate, and use information to achieve goals, are a necessary pathway to digital inclusion.
- **Consumer Safety:** Consumers — both individual and institutional — need accurate, unbiased information on how to safely navigate the digital world.

## Strategic Areas

The thoughtful deployment of broadband technologies in six specific strategic areas can strengthen communities and can improve the lives of their residents.

- **Economic and Workforce Development:** Communities need to develop the knowledge and skills of future workers and entrepreneurs, as well as help the current workforce update its competencies to meet the needs of employers.
- **Education:** Educational institutions should ensure that students have the digital skills to reach their full potential by connecting them to a diverse range of electronic resources.
- **Health Care:** Efficiencies and cost-savings in health care delivery, improvement to patient care, and support for independent living and management of health concerns are all enabled by access to broadband and digital technology.
- **Public Safety and Emergency Services:** Residents and first responders need integrated communications systems for emergency and disaster preparation, response, and recovery.
- **Civic Engagement:** Electronic interaction between community institutions, government agencies, and individuals creates enhanced opportunities for active participation in community affairs.
- **Social Connections:** Individual members of a community should have access to technologies that promote social engagement and the pursuit of independent learning and creative interests.



## How to use this worksheet

The IMLS Building Digital Communities Getting Started guide is intended to serve as a framework for community-wide planning.

The first step in getting started is to *convene key community stakeholders*. A core group may include representatives from the public library, the local government, and a focal community-based organization. Other potential stakeholders may include academic libraries, philanthropic foundations, other non-profits, the business sector or community residents.

Once the key community leaders are identified, the exercises in this workbook are designed to facilitate collaboration among them to work toward achieving digital inclusion goals.

### *Defining the Vision*

Defining a shared vision for the community as a whole is an important step toward thinking beyond the individual organizations and developing a shared understanding of digital inclusion.

### *Current Digital Inclusion Activities*

Take this step to acknowledge the work that is already being done and establish a baseline to build upon. Once each stakeholder has a picture of their organization's activities, compare charts to see the collective view of where the community stands in its progress toward digital inclusion.

### *Shared Community Priorities*

Based on your vision for community-wide digital inclusion and building on the current activities, work together to define the shared priorities, which will guide a comprehensive plan of action.

### *Collaborative Strategic Planning*

Before proceeding with collaborative planning, take this step to record what has made for successful collaborations in the past. Reflecting on the challenges encountered and the resulting solutions will help to prepare your team for obstacles in the path of progress toward digital inclusion.

### *Champions and Stakeholders*

With the shared community priorities defined, consider who else should be at the planning table.

### *Getting Stakeholder Buy-in*

When each stakeholder has a clear understanding of their purpose in the collaboration and of the benefit to participating, the partnership will be stronger and more trust-based.

### *Commitment to Action*

With the shared priorities, planning strategies and stakeholders determined, it's time to commit to specific steps to achieve the goals.

### *Making the Case for Digital Inclusion*

As key community leaders, you will need to articulate your digital inclusion vision and purpose to others. Although each stakeholder will play a unique role and engage in different activities, it is critical to develop a cohesive message with a common language.

## Defining the vision

In the Framework, IMLS offers this definition of a digitally connected nation:

*"All people, businesses, and institutions will have access to digital content and technologies that enable them to create and support healthy, prosperous, and cohesive 21st century communities."*

### Helpful TIPS:

Imagine a news headline three or more years from now that celebrates the success of your digital inclusion efforts. Think of the impact on your community as a whole, rather than on your individual organization. Dream big; imagine what success will look like.

What is your vision for a thriving digital community *where you live and work*?

### HEADLINE

### NOTES

Use the notes area to collect gems from other headlines.

## Current Digital Inclusion Activities

### Your *organization's* activities and projects

When planning your next actions to increase digital inclusion, it helps to have a baseline of where you are starting from. Connecting your current activities, projects and/or strategies with the categories in the Building Digital Communities Framework will reveal where your efforts are concentrated.

#### Helpful TIPS:

- What is your *organization* doing currently to increase digital inclusion?
- Which of the Framework principles or strategic areas do your efforts touch on? (Refer to pages 1-2.)
- Who is being served by this strategy? Who is excluded?

	Access Principles			Adoption Principles				Strategic Areas						
Current activities & projects	Availability	Affordability	Design for Inclusion	Public Access	Relevance	Digital Literacy	Consumer Safety	Economic & Workforce	Education	Health Care	Public Safety & Emergency	Civic Engagement	Social Connections	Who does this work serve?

### Next Steps: your *community's* activities and projects

Compare strategy charts with the other sectors of your community.

1. Working with your community team, note the areas that are strong and the gaps.

#### Areas of strength:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Gaps:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Collectively, are your organizations covering all of the principles and strategic areas?  
How well?

3. Who is not being served in your community?

## Shared Community Priorities

In an effort as complex as digital inclusion, it is critical to develop a shared community vision and to engage stakeholders from many sectors in the community to develop the comprehensive solutions necessary to make real progress.

Based on your current activities, what you discovered from others, and the insights from representatives of your community, what does your leadership team consider most important to work on in your community?

### Helpful TIPS:

1. Enter your priorities in the boxes under "Community Priority."
2. Identify the principles and strategic areas addressed by each priority.
3. List possible strategies which will help achieve the priority.

	Access Principles			Adoption Principles				Strategic Areas						
Community Priority	Availability	Affordability	Design for Inclusion	Public Access	Relevance	Digital Literacy	Consumer Safety	Economic & Workforce	Education	Health Care	Public Safety & Emergency	Civic Engagement	Social Connections	Strategies

## Collaborative Strategic Planning

Everyone has had some experience collaborating with other organizations or agencies. Drawing from the successes and challenges of past collaborations will help to prepare for effective collaboration focused on digital inclusion.

### Helpful TIPS:

- Describe a successful , positive collaboration experience;
- Identify why it was successful, what worked well;
- What were the challenges and how were they addressed?

## Collaboration Experiences

Collaboration	What worked?	What challenges?

Think about strategic planning for digital inclusion with other organizations in your community.

- What do you need from the collaboration?
- What obstacles do you anticipate? How can you prepare to address them?

Pitfalls and signs of trouble	Actions for a better outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Waiting to implement until planning is complete.</li> <li>▪ Participants don't understand what they should do differently as result of the doing a plan.</li> <li>▪ Plan components are developed separately and put together by committee.</li> <li>▪ Plan contains plans for others to solve problems.</li> <li>▪ Too much focus on the language until everyone agrees.</li> <li>▪ Plans are considered solutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capture the energy with early action; continuous loop of doing, planning, and learning.</li> <li>▪ Build strategies that clearly identify what people need to do differently to achieve success.</li> <li>▪ Integrate problems &amp; solutions, strengths &amp; weaknesses, program &amp; money, learning &amp; evaluation.</li> <li>▪ Build maps before or instead of plans.</li> <li>▪ Don't plan it, design it.</li> <li>▪ Set the bar for personal commitment to go first in changing behavior.</li> </ul>

## Champions and Stakeholders

Consider the stakeholders and champions who should be added to your community team. They may be involved in a variety of ways, from informing to consulting, leading to supporting. Anticipate the role they may play later in implementation, if they are not part of it now.

- What strengths does each stakeholder bring to digital inclusion efforts?
- Who do they connect you to?

Helpful TIPS:

For each additional stakeholder:

- Enter names & contact info;
- Identify what need or priority they contribute to;
- Specify what actions they might take or what resources they might share.

Champions and Stakeholders		
Person/ Organization	Need/Priority	Actions/ Resources



## Getting Stakeholder Buy-in

The emphasis in a successful collaboration is on what's in it for the community. However, each participating organization needs clarity about their purpose in the effort and how it will benefit each partner.

Maintain trust and confidence by always being clear about the motives for the collaboration. Focus the debate on the core issues and be consistent.

### Helpful TIPS:

- Identify each stakeholder or champion.
- Establish a clear purpose for their participation;
- and articulate the benefits to the individual or their organization.

Mutual Benefits	
Stakeholder or champion	What's in it for them?
	Purpose:
	Benefits:
	Purpose:
	Benefits:
	Purpose:
	Benefits:
	Purpose:
	Benefits:
	Purpose:
	Benefits:
	Purpose:
	Benefits:
	Purpose:
	Benefits:

## Commitment to Action

Now that the shared priorities, planning strategies and stakeholders are identified, it is important to connect these with specific next steps in order to stay focused on the goals. How will you support each other's efforts to reach the shared goals?

Milestones will help to measure the progress and success of your actions. At each milestone, be prepared to consider any changes in circumstance that may require the implementation plans to change.

### Helpful TIPS:

Identify tasks for your community priorities, assign lead responsibility, and list achievable milestones to be used in measuring and reporting progress.

Action Plan to Move Forward: Task Assignments		
Task	Lead responsibility	Goal / Milestone / Product

## Making the Case for Digital Inclusion

You have a vision for a digitally connected community but how will you make a compelling case to the other stakeholders in your community?

These steps will help to articulate the talking points and anticipate the responses of your most challenging audiences.

1. Revisit the headline vision from page 3. Is there anything you want to change? Change it here.

HEADLINE

2. Based on the vision and your plan of action, draft some talking points to take back to your community. Think first of your organization.

- How will you sell the idea?
- Who is the most challenging audience you will need to convince?
- What kind of messages will be most effective for this audience—case studies, data, stories, a personal connection, etc.?

Talking Points

3. Armed with your vision and talking points, work with your community team to articulate a broad, cohesive message that will be the foundation of your advocacy for community digital inclusion.

- Empower each other to talk convincingly about the actions you plan to take.
- Find a common language to talk across sectors about your shared vision, one that emphasizes the importance of community-wide collaboration to address a complex situation.

## Our compelling case for community digital inclusion

4. The common message will need to be tailored to specific audiences. Starting with the list below, note how you would emphasize or add to reach various stakeholders, while staying true to the core message.

- Your own organization (internal)
- Collaborators, partners, community champions
- Business/Private sector
- Community members
- Other

For additional tools and resources, visit the Digital Inclusion community of practice on WebJunction:  
[www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/digital-inclusion.html](http://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/digital-inclusion.html)

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