Connected Futures Playbook

Strategies for Advancing Digital Opportunity in Your Community

October 2026



AT&T connected LEARNING CENTER®

WORLD EDUCATION — A JSI INITIATIVE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This playbook grew out of something real: an ongoing, evolving partnership between World Education and community-based organizations across the country, all working to expand digital opportunity for the people they serve. Through AT&T's investment in the Connecting Communities for Digital Opportunity project, more than 100 AT&T Connected Learning Centers located in nonprofits and community organizations nationwide are receiving technical assistance and support to deepen and formalize their digital opportunity work. World Education serves as the strategic technical assistance provider, working closely alongside these organizations to understand their communities, strengthen their programs, and build the field knowledge of what works. This playbook is one product of that ongoing, collective learning.

We are grateful to AT&T for their support and continued commitment to narrowing the digital divide. Their Connected Learning Centers provide community members across the country with free access to high-speed internet, computers, training, and mentoring, and the organizations that host them are doing extraordinary work every day.

The organizations whose impact appears in these pages are a small but powerful sample of that broader network. We are deeply grateful to the dedicated teams at El Centro, Boys & Girls Clubs of Wake & Johnston Counties, CitySquare, Good Samaritan Community Services, Jewish Family Service of Dallas, Maverick Boys & Girls Club, Coalition for Responsible Community Development, The Salvation Army Ray & Joan Kroc Corps Community Center – Atlanta, Cherokee Nation, and Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund. Their experiences and insights bring this playbook to life and reflect the ingenuity and dedication we see across the entire network of Connected Learning Centers.

This playbook was created by World Education, a JSI initiative, and written by Catharine Morgan and Michaela Tobin, with strategic guidance from Sandy Goodman, Catalina González, Jen Vanek, Jeff Goumas, Stephanie Paloscio, and Priyanka Sharma. We are grateful to every colleague who contributed their time, expertise, and care to making this resource as useful as possible for the people doing this important work every day.

Connecting Communities for Digital Opportunity

AT&T connected LEARNING CENTER®

This publication was developed by World Education, a JSI initiative, as part of the Connecting Communities for Digital Opportunity Project, which is funded by AT&T. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of AT&T, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by AT&T.

CONTENTS

4 WELCOME

4 The Digital Opportunity Imperative

5 Who This Playbook Is For

6 Why We Wrote This Playbook

7 A Few Definitions

8 How to Use the Playbook

10 1. REVIEW AND DISCOVER

11 **1.1** Align Digital Opportunity with Your Mission

12 **1.2** Identify Client Needs and Goals

17 **1.3** Start with What You Have

20 **1.4** Explore Partnerships and Collaboration

22 2. IDEATE AND STRATEGIZE

23 **2.1** Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support

27 **2.2** Define Your Approach

31 **2.3** Make It Local

34 3. PLAN FOR SUCCESS

35 **3.1** Map Your Journey to Impact

40 **3.2** Anticipate Challenges

41 **3.3** Plan to Measure

44 4. ACTIVATE YOUR STRATEGIES

45 **4.1** Strengthen Staff Capacity

46 **4.2** Digital Ethics and Client Trust

48 **4.3** Effective Instruction

50 **4.4** Digital Navigation

53 5. ITERATE, IMPROVE, AND GROW

54 **5.1** Evolve, Iterate, Improve

55 **5.2** Share Your Story

58 **5.3** Sustaining Efforts: Funding and In-Kind Support

62 A FINAL NOTE

63 RESOURCES

65 ABOUT US



WELCOME

The Digital Opportunity Imperative

Every day, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and public-sector agencies are doing something remarkable. Youth workers, case managers, librarians, library staff, adult education instructors, workforce training coordinators, outreach coordinators, and program directors are meeting people where they are, at food pantries, housing offices, youth centers, health clinics, library branches, and training centers, and helping them take meaningful steps toward their goals. These organizations have long been trusted bridges between community members and the resources, services, and opportunities that can help them thrive.

92% of jobs

across all industries require digital skills.[1]

That bridge is more important than ever. Digital skills now shape whether someone can access a job posting, manage a benefits account, connect with a doctor, or help their child with homework. And the pace of change is accelerating. The rise of artificial intelligence is reshaping the skills employers expect, the tools people use to navigate daily life, and the ways services are delivered. Communities that have had fewer opportunities to build foundational digital skills risk being left further behind unless organizations like yours step up to meet this moment.

Community-based organizations are uniquely positioned to lead this work. They already have the trust, relationships, and deep community knowledge that no platform or algorithm can replicate.

---

1 Bergson-Shilcock, A., Taylor, R., and Hodge, N. (2023). Closing the Digital Skill Divide: The payoff for workers, business, and the economy. National Skills Coalition and Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/NSC-DigitalDivideSkinny-Report.pdf

WHO THIS PLAYBOOK IS FOR

This playbook is for the people leading and delivering that work: the program directors designing services, the case managers sitting side-by-side with clients, the executive directors making the case to funders, the adult educators and trainers on the front lines of skill-building, and the volunteers showing up week after week. If your organization works with communities that have had fewer opportunities to build digital access and skills, whether you are a library, a youth-serving organization, a housing agency, a re-entry program, an adult education or workforce training provider, or a neighborhood association, this playbook was written with you in mind.



Digital Opportunity

The full set of conditions needed for all people to have fair access to and use of technology to meet their personal, work, education, and civic goals.

You might be just starting to think about how digital skill building connects to your mission. Or you might already be informally helping clients navigate technology barriers, and you are ready to do that work more formally. Either way, this playbook will support you.

What you will find here is not a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all program. Think of it like a sports playbook: a collection of strategies that a coach draws from depending on the moment. You pick the plays that fit your team, your community, and your goals, and you adapt them as you learn. Whether you are in the early stages of brainstorming or looking to strengthen an approach that is already underway, you will find tools and strategies for every stage of the journey.

This work is built on a simple conviction: **your community already has strengths, and digital opportunity can unlock more of them.**

We are glad you are here.

WHY WE WROTE THIS PLAYBOOK

We are educators, and we have spent years working alongside the kinds of organizations described above—youth programs, libraries, adult education providers, workforce training centers, and housing agencies—watching them do extraordinary work for the people and communities they serve.

One pattern kept emerging: organizations were already weaving digital skills development into their work, helping clients set up email accounts, troubleshoot devices, find information online, or navigate benefits portals, but often without formal frameworks, dedicated resources, or recognition for that work. At the same time, the world kept moving faster. The services people depend on—healthcare, employment, housing, benefits, and education—are increasingly digital by default. And now, with artificial intelligence reshaping how we work, learn, and access information, the need to build lasting digital skills and confidence has never been greater.

We wrote this playbook because we believe community-based organizations, adult educators, libraries, and training providers are uniquely positioned to lead this work and because we want to make that work easier, more effective, and more sustainable. You bring the trust, the relationships, and the community knowledge. This playbook offers structured strategies, practical tools, and real-world examples to build on what you are already doing.

We also wrote it because existing resources on this topic often treat digital skill building as a standalone program, separate from the broader missions of the organizations doing the work. This playbook is designed differently. It is built around your programs, your clients, and your goals, with digital opportunity as a thread woven through everything you already do rather than something added on top.

This is important, ongoing work. Communities evolve. Technology evolves. The organizations that will make the biggest difference are the ones that build the capacity to keep growing and adapting alongside both. We are glad to be part of that journey with you.

A FEW DEFINITIONS

What's the real meaning behind all those "digital-something-or-other" buzzwords? Here are a few key terms as they're used throughout this playbook, adapted from definitions by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), Digital US, the American Library Association, and UNESCO.

Digital Access:
The physical means to connect to the internet, including reliable connectivity and hardware, such as computers, tablets, or smartphones.

Digital Divide:
A social and economic divide between those who can use technology to achieve their goals and those who cannot. It refers to the profound gap in technology access, skills, and knowledge that impacts individuals and communities globally.

Digital Friction:
The points where technology use becomes difficult, confusing, or disruptive for a person and becomes an obstacle to achieving their objective.

Digital Literacy:
The ability to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information using technology. It requires both technical and cognitive skills to understand the "why" and "when."

Digital Navigator:
Trusted guides who assist community members with ongoing, individualized support for accessing affordable and appropriate connectivity, devices, and digital skills.

Digital Opportunity:
The full set of conditions needed for all people to have fair access to and use of technology to meet their personal, work, education, and civic goals.

Digital Skills:
The practical abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information (the "how" and "what").

Digital Resilience:
The ultimate goal! It means having the awareness, agility, and confidence to solve problems, upskill, and adapt to evolving technological demands and societal shifts.

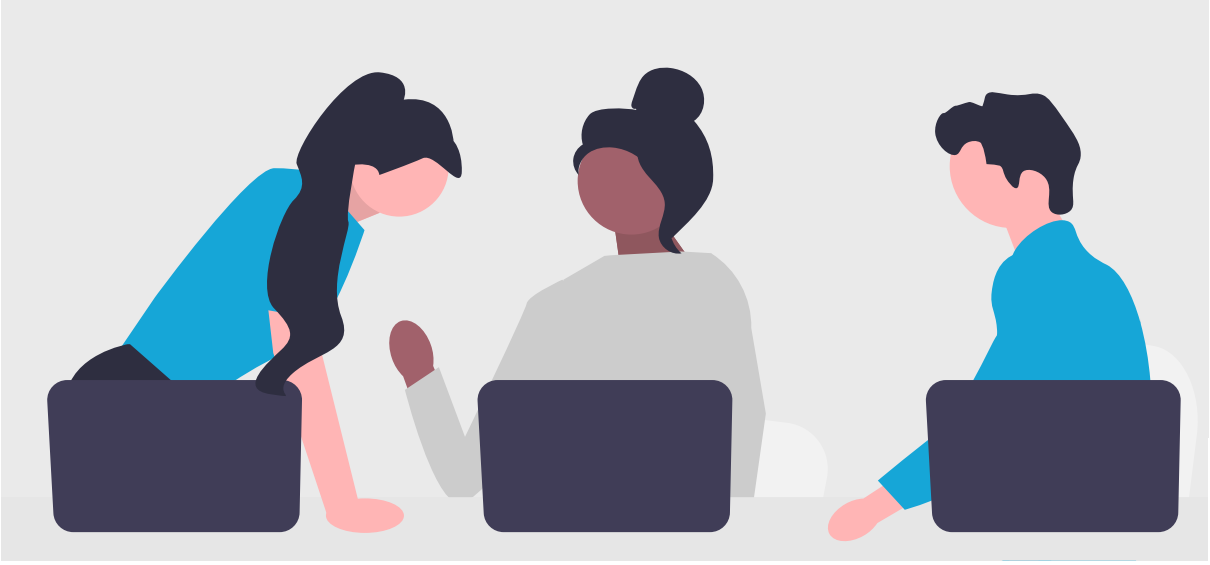
HOW TO USE THE PLAYBOOK

This playbook includes five sections—think of these as distinct stages or scenarios your organization might be in. Each section includes a number of strategies for how to approach the given stage. This playbook is intended not as a step-by-step guide, but rather as a launching off point to help generate and refine ideas and plans. Feel free to skip around, and take what works.

Each section opens with a brief overview of what to expect, how the plays connect to each other, and what you will walk away with. You will find adaptable strategies, or "plays," for establishing digital skill building programs or integrating digital opportunity into your existing service provision, along with practical "take-away" exercises ( ) and "think and discuss" activities ( ) for you to replicate on your own, and which together create a ready to use toolkit to help move your organization from ideation to implementation. Finally, the end of this playbook contains a curated resource library to build on the guidance provided in each section, offering extra support whenever you need it.

Section	Your Scenario	The Plays
1. Review and Discover 	**Getting Started** You are ready to dig into what digital opportunity means for your organization and the people you serve. You know your community, and this section helps you connect that knowledge to a clear strategic foundation by aligning digital opportunity with your mission, understanding your clients' needs, taking stock of what you already have, and identifying the partners who can help you go further.	**1.1** Align Digital Opportunity with Your Mission **1.2** Identify Client Needs and Goals **1.3** Start with What You Have **1.4** Explore Partnerships and Collaboration
2. Ideate and Strategize 	**Brainstorm the Approach** You have a solid sense of your clients' needs and your organization's strengths. Now you are ready to get practical about what digital opportunity support could actually look like, where it fits into your existing services, what delivery model makes sense, and how to make sure your design reflects the real voices and the realities of your community.	**2.1** Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support **2.2** Define Your Approach **2.3** Make It Local

Section	Your Scenario	The Plays
3. Plan for Success 	**Build Your Roadmap** You have a well-informed, community-grounded idea and now you are ready to turn it into action. This section helps you build the roadmap that connects your daily activities to long-term impact, stress-test your plan before you launch, and put a measurement system in place so you can track progress and tell your story with confidence.	**3.1** Map Your Journey to Impact **3.2** Anticipate Challenges **3.3** Plan to Measure
4. Activate Your Strategies 	**From Plan to Practice** Your plan is in place and it is time to put it into motion. This section helps you prepare your team, establish the ethical foundations that make your program a trusted space, deliver effective and culturally responsive support, and bring it all together through a real-world walkthrough of what activation looks like from first training to first client session.	**4.1** Strengthen Staff Capacity **4.2** Digital Ethics and Client Trust **4.3** Effective Instruction **4.4** Digital Navigation
5. Iterate, Improve, and Grow 	**Refine, Share, and Sustain** Your program is up and running and you are ready to make it even better. This section helps you build a regular rhythm for reviewing what is working and what is not, translate your outcomes and client stories into narratives that resonate with the people who need to hear them, and build a diversified funding strategy that keeps your work going for the long term.	**5.1** Evolve, Iterate, Improve **5.2** Share Your Story **5.3** Sustaining Efforts: Funding and In-Kind Support



1. REVIEW AND DISCOVER

Before you can design a program, you need to understand the landscape you are working in. This section helps you build the strategic foundation for your digital opportunity work by starting with what you already know and what you already have. The four plays in this section are designed to work together and sequenced to support discovery: you begin by connecting digital opportunity to your mission, then get to know your clients' specific needs and the barriers they face, then take stock of the assets already at your disposal, and finally explore the partnerships that can extend your reach. By the end of this section, you will have a clear picture of why this work matters for your organization, who it is for, and what you have to build on. This clarity and the guiding documents you create—Client Profiles, Asset Map, and Ecosystem Map—will be your launchpad for brainstorming in the next section.

Goal:

Establish the strategic foundation for digital opportunity by aligning it with your core mission, assessing existing assets, identifying client digital needs and barriers, and understanding your role in your client's ecosystem.

The Plays:

1.1 Align Digital Opportunity with Your Mission

1.2 Identify Client Needs and Goals

1.3 Start with What You Have

1.4 Explore Partnerships and Collaboration

Take-away Tools:

- Client Profiles
- Digital Friction Analysis
- Client Ecosystem Map
- Asset Map

1.1 Align Digital Opportunity with Your Mission

If you've seen a need for digital skills or digital integration, but you're not quite sure where and how these fit with the work you do, you might want to start by considering how digital access and services align with your core mission, can be integrated into your core services, and can help you achieve your goals.

Jumpstart your brainstorm with the reflection questions below.

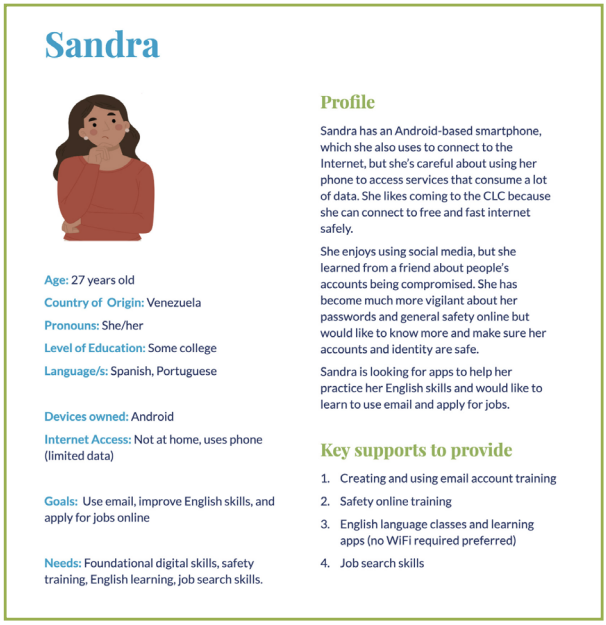
Mission	▪ What is your organization's core mission and primary goals? ▪ In what ways can integrating digital opportunity work help you achieve your mission? ▪ What problems do you aim to solve? How does the digital divide relate to those problems?
Services	▪ What services does your organization provide? ▪ How can digital resources, digital access, and digital skills enhance those services for clients? ▪ Are some services better suited for layering in digital skill building than others?
Demographics	▪ Who are the primary populations and communities that use your services and participate in your programs? ▪ Who are you not reaching? If you wanted to expand beyond your current clientele, what demographics is your organization poised to support? ▪ Are some populations more or less impacted, or impacted differently, by the digital divide or digital skills needs?
Clients	▪ What are your clients' motivations and goals for participating? ▪ How can advancing digital opportunity, digital skill building, and digital resilience help clients meet those goals?
Impact	▪ What are the key impacts of your organization's work? ▪ How might increasing digital opportunity work increase your overall impact?

TIP: If you get stuck, try skipping ahead to the other strategies in this section, which offer different ways of exploring similar questions in greater detail. You can also revisit this section after further brainstorming digital skill-building activities; doing so may help you prioritize those ideas most aligned with your mission.

1.2 Identify Client Needs & Goals

Create Participant "Profiles"

It may be helpful to create one or more profiles to represent the populations that you serve (e.g., "Sandra," an English language learner needing employment support, or "David," a senior needing connection to family). A profile is a hypothetical, composite character that represents a typical program participant and can help you design programs and services from their perspective.



Sandra

Age: 27 years old
Country of Origin: Venezuela
Pronouns: She/her
Level of Education: Some college
Language/s: Spanish, Portuguese

Devices owned: Android
Internet Access: Not at home, uses phone (limited data)

Goals: Use email, improve English skills, and apply for jobs online

Needs: Foundational digital skills, safety training, English learning, job search skills.

Profile

Sandra has an Android-based smartphone, which she also uses to connect to the Internet, but she's careful about using her phone to access services that consume a lot of data. She likes coming to the CLC because she can connect to free and fast internet safely.

She enjoys using social media, but she learned from a friend about people's accounts being compromised. She has become much more vigilant about her passwords and general safety online but would like to know more and make sure her accounts and identity are safe.

Sandra is looking for apps to help her practice her English skills and would like to learn to use email and apply for jobs.

Key supports to provide

1. Creating and using email account training
2. Safety online training
3. English language classes and learning apps (no WiFi required preferred)
4. Job search skills

Personifying your client or end user helps you tap into natural empathy to understand their fears, motivations, and digital barriers to ultimately better design and deliver services. For example, seniors may find the digital world unfamiliar and harbor mistrust toward it, while English-language learners may require culturally sensitive engagement and multilingual support. Youth looking for jobs need help getting comfortable with using desktop computers even if they are adept at using mobile phones for communication and social media.

TIP: Don't assume—ask the community!
Whenever resources and time allow, base your profiles on real-data collected through client surveys. At a minimum, you should validate any assumptions with your target clients; assuming needs can lead to programs that are irrelevant or unhelpful. For more on this approach, see 2.3 Make It Local for details on co-creating digital opportunity services with community members.

Building Your Profiles: A Structured Framework

The following categories and questions are intended to help structure your thinking as you build your participant profiles. During this exercise, there may be other categories not listed here that are relevant to your organization or the population you serve that you wish to include.

Identity & Demographics

- **Who are they?** (Include their age, gender identity, ethnic or racial identity, family or community role, work experience, and special interests.)
- **What is their background?** (Include their educational experience, job or career training, primary language.)

Interests, Engagement & Goals

- **Engagement:** Why do they come to you? Which of your organization's programs do they currently use, and how frequently?
- **Goals:** What drives them? What are their specific goals (e.g., finding a job, staying connected to family)?

Technology Access & Skills

- **Devices owned:** What devices do they already use?
- **Software, Apps, and Skills:** How do they currently use technology in their daily life?
- **Internet Access:** How, if at all, are they accessing the internet and for what purposes?

Challenges & Needs

- **Challenges:** What are their specific challenges (e.g., lack of data/home internet, outdated devices, lack of "desktop" skills, or concerns for online security and safety)?
- **Need:** How would improved digital skills specifically help this person achieve their goals? What skills or support do they need to develop these skills?

TIP: You might want to create a few different profiles to represent the range of clients you work with. Designing for Sandra's needs and goals will look different from designing for David's.

Identify Digital Friction Points

Once you have a sense of your client profiles, look closely at their goals, challenges, and needs. Where, when, and how do their challenges and needs show up in the context of digital skills and access to technology? Where, when, and how do technology-related challenges stop them from making progress toward their goals? These are instances of **digital friction**: points where technology use becomes difficult, confusing, or disruptive for learners.

You can use your profiles as a "stress test" for your current or planned services. Compare each profile's reality against your program's requirements or services to identify instances of digital friction.

The table below shows some hypothetical examples and a template you can replicate.



Digital Friction Analysis

Organization / Program Type (examples)	Profile	Service Stage / Program Activity	Client Action or Need	Digital Friction (Barrier)
Career Center	Sandra	Ongoing Support	Client is searching for games and apps to practice English language skills	Client lacks access to wifi at home and her smartphone has limited data
Senior Center	David	Ongoing Support	Client wants to attend Center events, such as weekly social hours or health seminars for seniors	Client can't access the center's online newsletter or calendar

- **Client Profile:** Refer to the profiles you created in the exercise above. Use each row to document a digital barrier faced by a client profile. Note that a single profile may experience multiple points of digital friction throughout your program or at a single point in your service delivery.
- **Service Stage/ Program Activity:** Think about your service provision or programming chronologically. At what stage does this profile first encounter a barrier? For example, do they experience digital friction during initial intake? accessing ongoing email communication? navigating service websites?
- **Client Action, Need, or Goal:** Define exactly what the client is attempting to achieve when they encounter the barrier. This is especially helpful to understand in order to brainstorm effective solutions to address their barriers.
- **Digital Friction or Barrier:** Specify the exact obstacle(s) preventing the client from achieving their need or goal.

LOOKING AHEAD: In 2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support you will build on this assessment to develop "pivots" and strategies that address these identified gaps.

Take an Ecosystem Approach

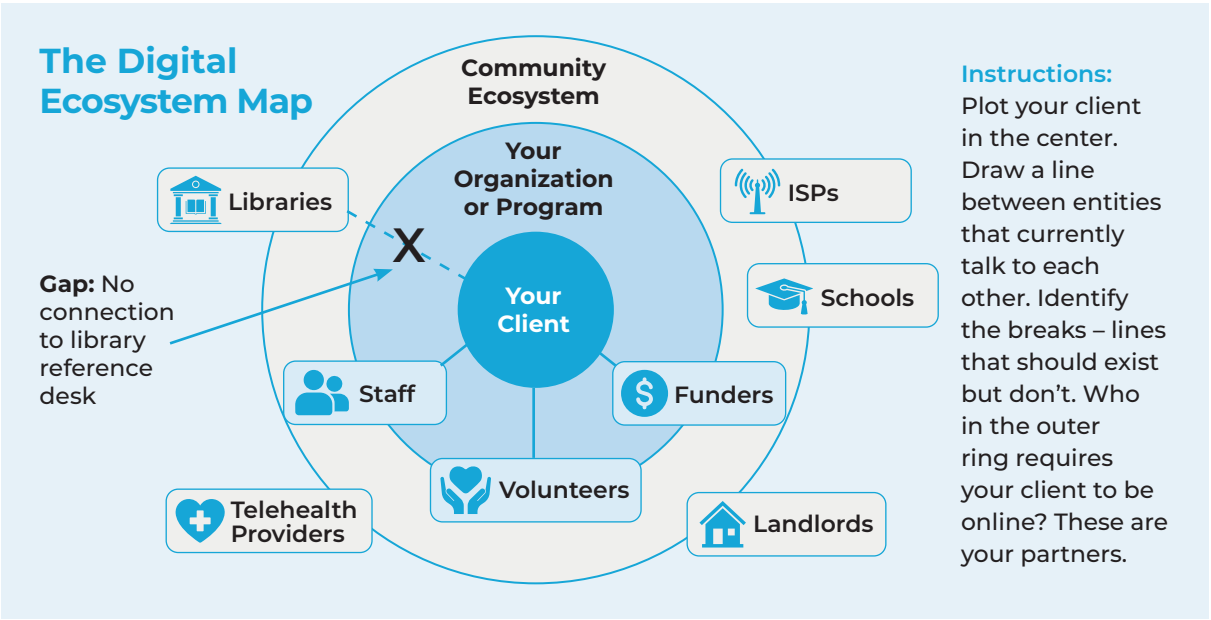
To effectively advance digital opportunity, you need to not only meet your client where they are, but also see how your client—and your organization—fit within a broader ecosystem of supports, service providers, and entities that they access, interact with, and are impacted by in their daily life.

An ecosystem lens helps you identify partners with aligned interests and uncover support systems you might otherwise overlook. For example, if a client is unable to track their child's grades or communicate with teachers because they don't know how to use the district's digital grading platform (e.g., PowerSchool or Canvas), the school, a local library, or other district entity could become a natural partner to facilitate training and guidance on navigating these systems, addressing shared goals of supporting families and child development. Looking at your client's world this way also allows you to see what other sources of support your client might already have so that you don't duplicate efforts.

Visualize Your Client's World: The Ecosystem Map

Imagine your client at the center of this ecosystem. Directly surrounding them are the resources your organization provides. Beyond that lies a wider network of entities—such as employers, education or other social service providers, government agencies, technology providers—that your client must engage with to navigate their daily lives.

Consider which of these entities require your client to perform tasks digitally. Referencing the client profiles from earlier in this section, where might your client encounter digital friction? These friction points are not just obstacles; they are strategic avenues for collaboration.



THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: CitySquare, an organization in Dallas, Texas, that fights the causes and effects of poverty through service, advocacy, and friendship illustrates how an organization can rapidly enhance its digital opportunity efforts by taking an ecosystem approach to leverage the specialized expertise of external partners with aligned interests. Based on the needs of their clients, CitySquare adapted their digital literacy work to also include workshops and services covering financial literacy, legal aid, health and social resource navigation. A key example of this collaborative model is their partnership with PNC Bank, which provides an on-site mobile unit to guide clients through digital banking tools and financial management. This partnership approach allows CitySquare to connect clients with additional resources and training from service providers they already engage with, without overextending its internal staff. Through seeking out and establishing these external partnerships, CitySquare effectively expanded its service capacity to meet the multifaceted needs of its clients.



LOOKING AHEAD: In the next section, you will identify your organization's internal and community "assets" that can be drawn upon as you plan to advance digital opportunity in your community. Think about how your clients' ecosystem aligns with resources available within your organization and your community as a whole. What does your organization already have that would enable you to support the digital needs of your client? What resources are you missing internally that could be leveraged within your client's wider ecosystem to avoid duplicating efforts? What entities have a vested interest in your client's digital skill building? How are your missions aligned?

1.3 Start with What You Have

You have already invested time, expertise, and passion into your community. Before looking for new resources, it is critical to understand how your existing resources can be leveraged to integrate digital opportunity advancement into your programs and services. **Asset mapping** is a systematic process to identify, inventory, and leverage the strengths and resources that already exist within your organization and the immediate community you serve.

Viewing your organization through an asset-based lens helps you design a resilient program that is built on existing strengths rather than on perceived deficits. This exercise will help you determine where minimal investment can yield maximum impact.



Asset mapping

Use the framework below to conduct a comprehensive inventory of your organization's and community's resources. The goal is to move beyond obvious physical assets and capture the intangible strengths that fuel your work.

Step 1: Inventory Your Organization's Internal Assets

Identify everything your organization currently controls or manages that could be applied to an initiative to advance digital opportunity.

Asset Category	Examples of Questions to Consider
Human Capital	Who on your staff or volunteer team is already proficient in digital tools and could provide ongoing tech support? Who is a trusted community leader? Who is passionate about teaching/mentoring?
Physical Space	Do you have a quiet room, a computer lab, or a dedicated corner that could host one-on-one digital navigation sessions? Is the space accessible and available during times that work for your clients (e.g., evenings/weekends)?
Technology	What devices (laptops, tablets, phones) are currently unused? What is the quality and reliability of your Wi-Fi/broadband access? What software licenses do you already possess (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Office)?

Asset Category	Examples of Questions to Consider
Programmatic	What services or programs do clients already trust and regularly access (e.g., food pantry, job counseling, youth after-school)? These are the perfect "entry points" (See 2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support) for *embedding* digital opportunity work.
Financial/ In-Kind	Do you have a line item in your budget that could be modestly re-allocated? Do you receive regular in-kind donations of school supplies, which could be repurposed to technology accessories?



LOOKING AHEAD: The output of this exercise directly feeds into your **Impact Roadmap** (3.1 Map Your Journey to Impact), which shows how your day-to-day programming connects to long-term goals. All the internal and community resources you identify will become the inputs for your digital opportunity work.

Step 2: Inventory Your Community and Partner Assets

Now, look beyond your own walls to the institutions and people your clients already interact with (you can refer back to your client's ecosystem for ideas) as well as those in your community who may not already interact with you and your clients, but who might have services, skills, or other resources that could support your efforts. These are your potential **Strategic Partners**.

Asset Category	Examples of Questions to Consider
Formal Partners	Which libraries, community colleges, K-12 schools, or health clinics are already serving your client base? Do they offer public computer access or free classes? *(Avoid duplicating efforts.)*
Informal Networks	Who are the trusted tech-savvy people in the community (e.g., a retired IT worker, a local youth who helps parents with phones)? Are there local cultural centers, faith-based organizations, or places of worship with strong community ties?

Asset Category	Examples of Questions to Consider
Employer/ Business	Which local employers have a vested interest in a digitally skilled workforce? Which local businesses might donate time and expertise, refurbished hardware, or discounted internet service? (See also **Engage Employers** in 1.4 Explore Partnerships and Collaboration.)
Government/ Civic	Which local government offices (e.g., housing, employment) are already running programs that include digital literacy components? Can they refer clients to you or share best practices?



LOOKING AHEAD: The next section, 1.4 Explore Partnerships and Collaboration, provides additional guidance on identifying and establishing relationships with partners.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: El Centro, a nonprofit organization focused on helping the Hispanic community thrive in North Mississippi, has capitalized on existing resources to integrate basic computer and internet classes to round out a workshop history that has included financial literacy, small-business ownership, and mortgage seminars into their service provision. They have leveraged their space and community resources, such as recruiting volunteers and hiring a Spanish-speaking community member to lead their computer basics workshops. By drawing on internal and external assets, El Centro has been able to offer programming to meet the digital opportunity needs of their community.



1.4 Explore Partnerships and Collaboration

The digital divide is a large and complex challenge that can feel daunting to face, but your organization doesn't have to go it alone. There are people and organizations throughout your community waiting for the chance to partner with you to help address these needs together!

Identify Strategic Partners

Actively seek out partnerships with government agencies, educational institutions (K-12, community colleges), libraries, businesses, nonprofits, and other community-based organizations.

Engage Employers

Collaborate with employers to identify in-demand digital skills and integrate workplace learning opportunities for those entering the workforce. If employment is not a primary goal for your clients, shift your focus to the external service providers they rely on daily. Ensure clients possess the digital literacy required to access essential resources—for example, the ability to navigate telehealth portals for medical appointments or manage online government benefit systems (like Social Security or housing registries).

Culturally Responsive Outreach

Partner with community liaisons and organizations that serve specific community subpopulations to understand local needs, conduct outreach in people's preferred languages, and build trust.

Try It Out, Then Formalize

It can be helpful to develop formal agreements (e.g., a memorandum of understanding, or MOU) to guide collaborative partnerships. But, if you don't yet have a relationship with a potential partner, working together on a small-scale pilot, like a one-off workshop or a jointly hosted event can be a great way to test out how you work together, build trust, and get a sense of clients' reactions.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: At the Boys & Girls Clubs of Wake & Johnston Counties in North Carolina, the Club's career coach partnered with a local driving school to offer a fully online driver's education course inside the club's computer lab. The effort was later highlighted at a local school board meeting as a model for cross-sector collaboration.

THINK AND DISCUSS: Mapping Your Potential Partnerships

Use these prompts to guide your initial conversations and asset mapping related to community partnerships:

Existing Partnerships: What partners do you already have that are willing and able to help support your new digital opportunity efforts?

Technology and Access: What low-cost internet connection services are available in your area (e.g., through ISPs, government programs)? Do you know of any local refurbishing programs that could provide devices to clients?

Skill-Building and Education: Do you know of any digital literacy programs offered at your local library, community college, or other nonprofit that you could partner with to avoid duplicating efforts? Are there any upskilling or job training programs you can connect learners to for advanced skill development?

Community Support and Specific Needs: Are there agencies working with English-language learners that can help you with culturally responsive recruiting or language access needs? What services are available in your community for people with learning differences or physical disabilities, and how can you partner with them to ensure support for all community members?

LOOKING AHEAD: Like your internal assets, these partnerships or community resources feed into your Impact Roadmap and become inputs for your digital opportunity work.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: At Good Samaritan Community Services in San Antonio, staff successfully leveraged a variety of community partners by hosting a Digital Life Fair that brought together a diverse range of more than a dozen local organizations, including the local utility company (CPS Energy), the water system, healthcare providers, and a technology refurbisher (Compudopt). Families who attended the event were able to connect with multiple essential services in one trusted space, while also receiving a refurbished laptop. By collaborating across sectors, the organization not only distributed necessary devices but also created a comprehensive support network that addressed the multifaceted needs of their community, demonstrating the immense value of strategic partnerships.



2. IDEATE AND STRATEGIZE

With a solid foundation in place, this section helps you move from understanding to ideas. Here you will get practical about what digital opportunity support could actually look like in your organization and for your clients. The three plays build on each other deliberately: you start by mapping where digital friction shows up in your existing services and identifying natural entry points for support, then refine your idea by thinking through what delivery model and approach best fits your context and capacity, and finally make sure your design reflects the voices and realities of your community. The goal of this section is not to arrive at a finished plan (you'll do that in the next section), but to arrive at a well-informed, community-grounded idea that is ready to be shaped into one.

Goal:

Brainstorm and design human-centered, context-specific strategies to advance digital opportunity by identifying points of digital friction and designing an appropriate service model.

The Plays:

2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support

2.2 Define Your Approach

2.3 Make It Local

Take-away Tools:

- Digital Opportunity Entry Points Table

2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support

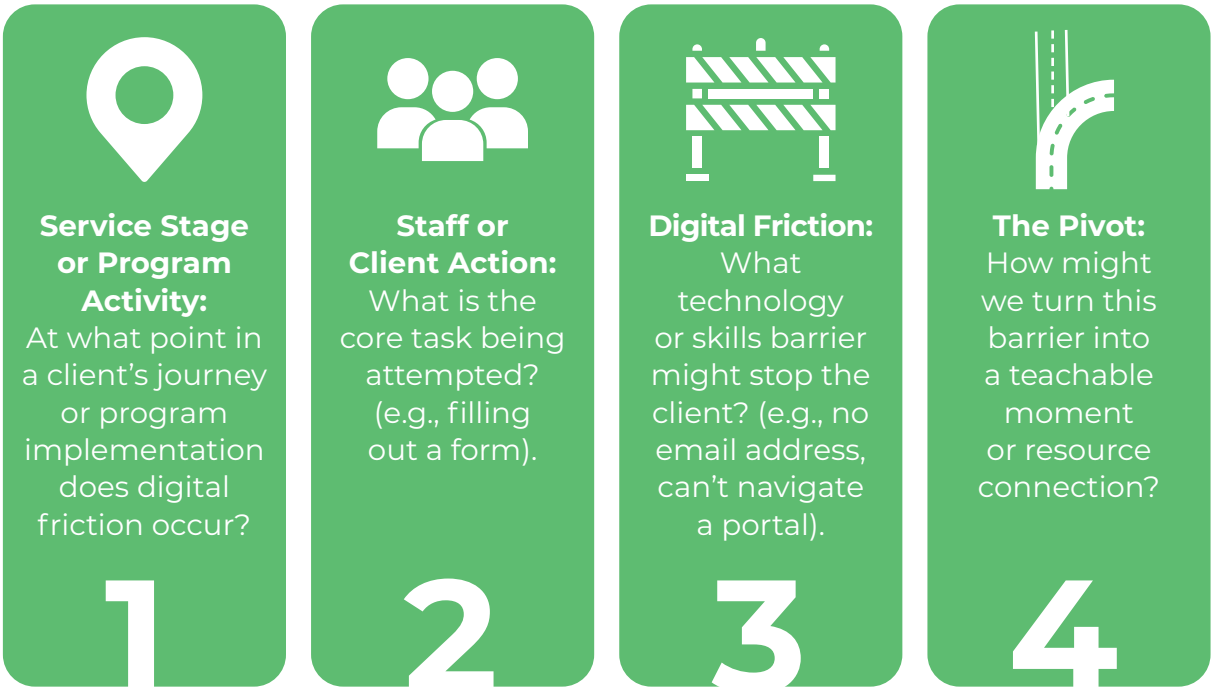
The ultimate goal of your digital opportunity programming is to build the community's **Digital Resilience**, or the awareness, agility, and confidence to solve problems, upskill, and adapt to evolving technological demands and societal shifts. This section will help you analyze your current programming to find strategic entry points for programming that advance digital opportunity and strengthen digital resilience in your community.

Turn Friction into Opportunity

If you're reading this playbook, you've likely already identified common challenges your clients face with digital technologies. Even so, before diving into program planning, it can be helpful to map these areas of digital friction, the points where technology use becomes difficult, confusing, or disruptive for learners, in a methodical way. Doing so can help you identify strategic entry points to integrate or embed digital opportunity work into your programming and work towards strengthening your clients' digital resilience.

Identify Digital Opportunity Entry Points

To transform a client's barrier into a meaningful intervention, we recommend using a simple, four-step framework:



There might be steps that make sense for your organization, programs, or client population. The key is to map the different steps and challenges in a methodical way, so that when it comes time to plan and prioritize resources you can make informed decisions about which entry points make the most sense. The next page includes a few examples of what this might look like.

Program Type	Service Stage / Program Activity	Client Action or Need	Digital Friction (Barrier)	The Pivot *(How might we...?)*
Food Pantry	Intake	Client signs up for monthly grocery boxes via a paper form.	Client doesn't have a reliable email to receive pickup reminders.	Help the client set up a Gmail/Outlook account on-site and show them how to flag the pantry as a "VIP" sender.
Housing Nonprofit	Service Delivery	Client is searching for affordable units on a provided list.	Client struggles to use Google Maps to check transit routes or proximity to work.	A 5-minute "map-hack" session: Teach the client how to use "Layers" and "Directions" to evaluate housing locations independently.
Re-entry Program	Transition	Client is preparing to apply for jobs post-incarceration.	Client is intimidated by using word processing software and uploading PDFs/resumes.	Use the resume-building phase to teach core workplace skills like File Management (saving, naming, and uploading files) and creating documents with tools like Microsoft Word.
Career Center	Ongoing Support	Client is searching for English-language learning (ELL) apps to supplement their training.	Client does not have access to internet at home and their mobile data bandwidth is extremely limited.	Help the client install offline-capable ESL apps (like Duolingo or Google Translate with downloaded language packs) while on the center's Wi-Fi, and provide a printed map of other local "Free Wi-Fi Zones" in their neighborhood.
Senior Center	Ongoing Support	Seniors want to attend Center events, like weekly social hours or health seminars.	Seniors feel isolated because they can't access the center's online newsletter or calendar.	Create a "Digital Buddy" station where volunteers show seniors how to bookmark the center's site and add events to their phone calendars.
Youth Mentoring	Intake	Parents are required to sign waivers and permissions.	Parents struggle with E-signature software (DocuSign).	Host a "Tech Check-In" night where staff walk parents through mobile e-signing, explaining it as a tool they can use for school forms and taxes.

TIP: If you find yourself stumped when it comes to brainstorming intervention points, try flipping your perspective with the design thinking approach: ***"How might we...?"***

For each point of digital friction you identify, rephrase the problem statement into a question that begins with ***"How might we...?"*** to frame the challenge as an opening for a brainstorming conversation and lead directly to **The Pivot** on previous page.

Example: *Clients forget their passwords and get locked out of email. How might we create a secure, physical way for clients to carry their passwords with them?*

Example: *Parents can't help kids with digital homework. How might we turn digital homework into a collaborative family activity rather than a solo task?*

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: Amarillo, Texas, is one of the least connected cities in the country. Yet, Maverick Boys & Girls Club in Amarillo provides a prime example of how identifying points of digital friction in existing services can provide a natural entry point for building digital resilience. Staff recognized that parents faced a significant barrier: registering their children for summer camp required navigating an online portal, which was a struggle for those without reliable home internet or digital confidence. Instead of turning this into a roadblock, the Club used it as a teachable moment. They provided access and guided parents through the online registration process. Parents walked out not only with confirmation emails, but with a newfound confidence that they could navigate the next form or portal required to access opportunities for their families.

Consider Access to Technology and Connectivity

A great starting point for advancing digital opportunity is recognizing and addressing the existing gaps in technology access. The table below identifies common digital divides and examples of the specific organizational interventions, like digital navigation services, required to bridge them.

Barrier to Access	Digital Opportunity Approach
Participants lack requisite hardware or network connectivity.	Offer loaner devices (laptops, tablets, hotspots) and support for securing affordable home internet services. Recognizing that low-income households disproportionately lack access, and many rely on smartphones, providing larger-screen devices is crucial for effective learning.
Programs stall when a device breaks or glitches.	Establish hotlines or drop-in support, including bilingual options, to help learners maintain devices and troubleshoot issues.
Participants experience confusion over how to use digital services.	Implement Digital Navigator programs where trained staff or volunteers assist clients with internet access, devices, and using online services. These services should be offered in diverse, non-traditional settings (e.g., food pantries, community centers, wherever clients typically go to access your services) and integrated with existing programs.
Staff lack the tools or skills to support learners.	Conduct an internal audit to ensure staff have updated hardware and the knowledge to mentor others.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: CitySquare, an organization in Dallas, Texas, that fights the causes and effects of poverty through service, advocacy, and friendship, demonstrates how an organization can successfully embed digital literacy into its established services by aligning new offerings with existing programmatic infrastructure. To ensure their digital learning lab functioned as a true complement to their Neighbor Resource Center, CitySquare conducted an interest survey to understand the areas around digital literacy that are most desired within their community and built a schedule of class offerings around these. To maximize access, CitySquare planned lab operating days and hours around those most accessible for their clients and integrated recruitment into their regular community engagement sessions, rather than building a separate outreach strategy. By also leveraging their existing data management systems to track workshop registration and progress, CitySquare ensured that services that advance digital opportunity became a core, measurable component of their broader service model rather than a siloed initiative.

2.2 Define Your Approach

You and your colleagues are busy, and it can be overwhelming to think of adding more. However, as the examples of "pivots" in the table in 2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support show, it's absolutely possible to build digital opportunity through quick and simple strategies linked to your current activities. Alternatively, it might make more sense to leverage the resources and structures you have to start something new. This section will help you think through some of the considerations for how to incorporate digital skillbuilding into your work, whether through embedding in and integrating with existing programming or standing up a new initiative.

What level of integration is most appropriate given your current programs, resources, and client needs?

Can you...

- **Embed digital opportunity work into existing programming?**
  For example, if your organization provides job training, you could include digital literacy components to help participants navigate online job portals and write resumes.

- **Adapt existing programming to meet specific community needs?**
  For example, if you serve a community with specific language preferences, you could offer existing digital skills training in their preferred language, and in a format and frequency that works better for their learning and schedules.
- **Create new digital opportunity activities or programming?**
  For example, you can consider offering new workshops, classes, and training sessions to teach basic to advanced digital skills, or providing more specialized training in topics of interest to the community you serve.



REFLECT BACK: Think back to your work on 1.1 Align Digital Opportunity with Your Mission to guide your approach to integration. Treat integration as a process, where there's always opportunity to improve, rather than a one-time decision.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: Jewish Family Service (JFS) Dallas, a nonprofit providing counseling, food assistance, education, and employment support, is often a first stop for Texans navigating complex challenges. People may come in for one thing and discover a place that sees both them and the bigger picture. This holistic orientation made embedding digital skills a natural fit for JFS. For example, JFS was already running English Language Learning classes, and realized they could incorporate lessons on using Zoom and other digital tools into this existing programming. Similarly, JFS has grown to weave digital skills into services people already rely on, such as counseling sessions, food-bank visits, and résumé workshops. In doing so, JFS turns everyday interactions into hands-on tech practice. Clients leave knowing how to schedule a telehealth appointment, refill benefits online, or video chat with family. It's not an extra class; it's a practical extension of services JFS already provides.



What approach(es) are most appropriate for you and your clients?

If your organization is integrating digital skills into existing programs, you can likely leverage your current delivery structures. However, if you are launching digital skill building as a new program or in a new delivery model, you'll want to determine what approach best fits your clients' needs and organizational context. There are several options from drop-in format to scheduled times, and from group learning to individualized support. You might consider in-person, remote, blended, and self-study options, leveraging mobile-first design for accessibility, as well as learning lounges and peer-to-peer collaboration models like Learning Circles. Consider which is most appropriate for you, and if it makes sense to offer just one approach or a mix of different options.



A Learning Circle

A Learning Circle is a model for collaborative study that helps learners master new skills through peer-to-peer support, integrating group activities with course content to foster a supportive learning community.

Mythbusting: "Traditional" Models of Instruction

While you might picture a digital skills program taking place in a well-equipped computer lab over several weeks, programs designed to expand digital opportunity don't need to follow a traditional model of intensive, classroom-based instruction. In fact, relying solely on these formats often fails to reach learners who may not have access to traditional learning spaces, or who face other attendance barriers such as limited time or transportation. To truly broaden access and meet the needs of diverse learners, instruction can and should take many different forms to adapt where, how, and by whom learning is delivered.

Ingredients to Expand Access to Instruction			
Places	**Devices**	**Time**	**People**
What Most Services Look Like			
■ Classrooms	■ Computers	■ Multiple months	■ Formal instructors
Ingredients That Can Increase Access			
■ Drop-in labs ■ Community spaces ■ Workplaces	■ Laptops ■ Tablets ■ Mobile phones	■ Few weeks ■ Short workshops ■ Drop-in supports	■ Career coaches ■ Social workers ■ Corporate trainers ■ Tutors/volunteers ■ Peer instructors

Who Will Deliver Services?

Once you understand your participants' needs, the next step is determining who is best positioned to support them. There is no one-size-fits-all approach; the right delivery model depends on your existing capacity and the specific trust levels within your community.

Service Delivery Models

You might choose one of the following structures or a "hybrid" approach that combines several:

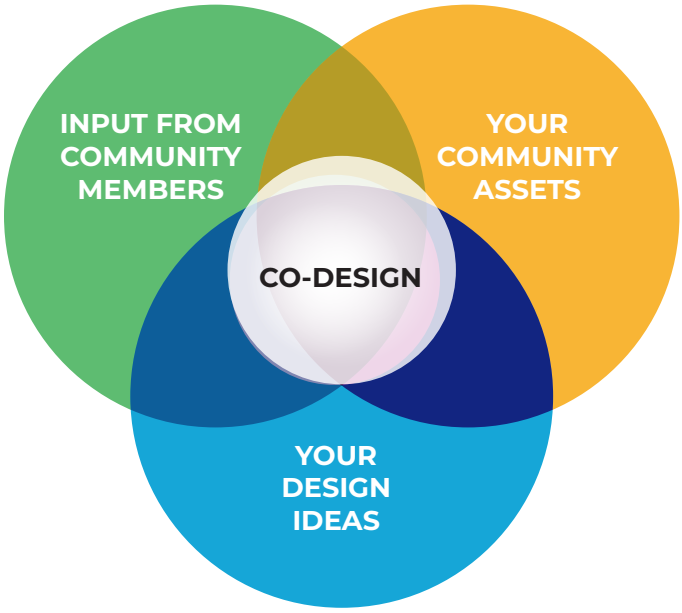
- **The Digital Navigation Model:** This is a highly flexible, one-stop-shop approach. A "Digital Navigator" is a trained individual (staff or volunteer) who provides holistic, one-on-one support—from helping a client sign up for low-cost internet and troubleshooting a tablet to teaching foundational digital skills. This model is infinitely customizable to your organization's context (see 4.4 Digital Navigation).
- **Designated Staffing:** You may choose to hire or appoint a specific staff member whose primary focus is digital opportunity. This ensures a dedicated point of contact and consistent expertise for all participants.
- **Integrated Staffing:** Instead of a single specialist, you can train your entire current team to share program tasks. This weaves technology support into your existing case management or program delivery.
- **Community-Led Volunteers:** Recruiting members of the community to serve as the face of your program can be incredibly effective. These individuals often bring vital "soft skills," such as fluency in another language or a deep understanding of the cultural barriers your participants face.



TIP: Look back at the individuals or organizations you identified in the **Asset Mapping** exercise in 1.3 Start with What You Have. These may be your prime candidates for recruiting or co-training your service delivery team.

2.3 Make It Local

Ensure the service model is relevant, trusted, and sustainable by designing it *with* your community, not just *for* them.



Co-Design with Your Community

Co-design is the process of collaboratively generating solutions with the people who will use the service. Co-designing digital opportunity programs enhances their effectiveness by involving community members directly in the development process. Additionally, co-creation fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among community members, leading to higher participation and more successful outcomes.

Co-Design Principles	Action Prompts
Don't Assume — Ask the Community	▪ Use surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one interviews to ask about device access, confidence levels, and specific task challenges (e.g., telehealth, helping kids with homework). ▪ Bring your profiles (from 1.2 Identify Client Needs and Goals) back to community members. Do they feel authentic? Do the challenges, motivations, and goals you assigned them match real-world experiences? ▪ Review the digital friction points you mapped in 1.2 Identify Client Needs and Goals. Ask clients and staff if the "Pivot" opportunities feel natural and useful, or if they add friction to the existing service.

Co-Design Principles	Action Prompts
Test and Refine	▪ Sharing your plans and gauging participant likes and suggestions for improvement. ▪ Consider running a pilot with a small group of clients to test and refine the program before a full-scale launch.
Sustain Engagement	▪ How can you continue to collaborate and generate insights with end users throughout your programming? ▪ Consider establishing advisory committees or leadership teams comprised of clients to provide ongoing feedback and suggestions throughout the program design and implementation phases.

Know Your Community

You (and your community members!) know your community best. While this guide aims to spur ideas and point you to resources, you'll need to contextualize your delivery model, materials, and staffing to fit the specific culture and language landscape of your local community. A service is only accessible if it is trusted and understandable.

Contextualization Area	Guiding Principle and Action
Cultural Responsiveness	Digital Navigators or program staff should understand and respect learners' culture. They need the ability to effectively understand, communicate with, and interact with people across cultures, norms, and traditions. This builds the trust necessary for clients to feel safe seeking help.
Language Access	Identify the language divide. Determine the languages spoken in your community besides English, and the percentage of your target population that are English-language learners.

Contextualization Area	Guiding Principle and Action
Outreach	Make sure your outreach is community connected. Partner with community liaisons and organizations that serve specific immigrant and refugee communities. This helps you conduct outreach in clients' preferred languages and ensures you are speaking through trusted local messengers.
Varying Needs	Plan for diverse populations. Consider the specific supports individuals might need to be successful (e.g., assistive technology for people with disabilities, learning differences). Partner with existing community service organizations to secure these supports.

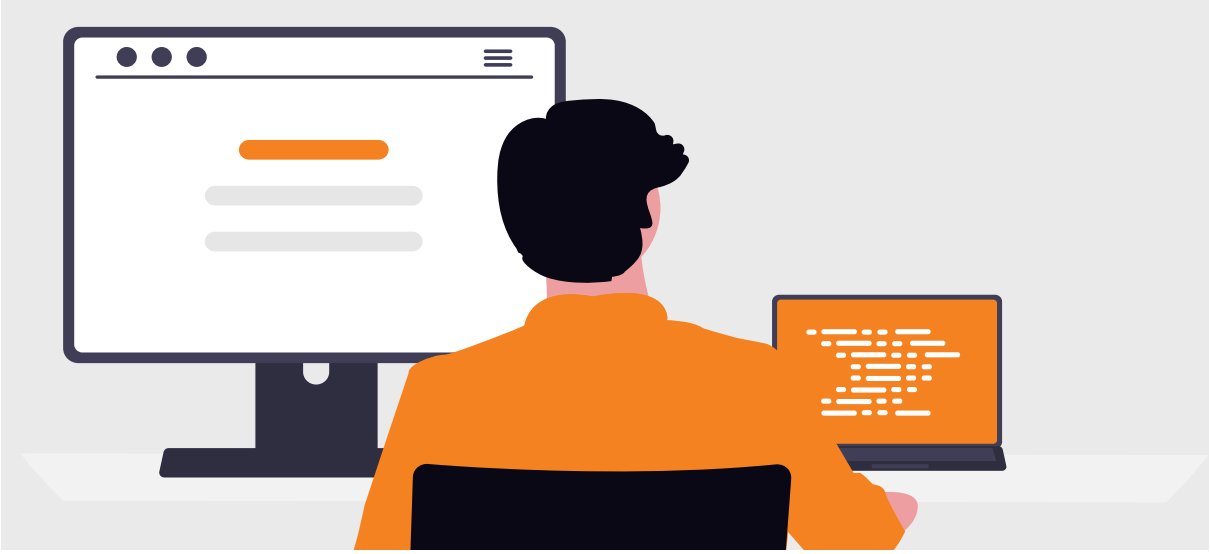


TIP: Local data sources, such as the American Community Survey (ACS), can provide useful insights to help contextualize your programming. This data provides essential information about household device ownership, internet access types, and overlap between digital gaps and specific age or income groups, among other variables.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: The Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD) in South Los Angeles illustrates how deep-rooted community knowledge allows an organization to proactively adapt its programming. By maintaining consistent relationships with residents, often spanning from youth through adulthood, CRCD leveraged contextual knowledge of the shifting barriers its community faces. This lifelong responsiveness is best illustrated by the story of Carina, a client who originally engaged with the organization as a child for after-school tutoring in a safe, supportive environment. Years later, she returned to that same familiar space as an adult, seeking the digital tools necessary to complete post-secondary coursework and navigate the job market. Because the organization had evolved its services to meet the modern digital landscape and evolving client needs, it was ready to support her adult goals in a familiar, trusted environment.





3. PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Brainstorming gives you a destination. This section helps you draw a clear, actionable roadmap to get there. The three plays work sequentially to help you operationalize the idea you developed in the previous section: you start by building your Impact Roadmap and Implementation Timeline, connecting your daily activities to the long-term outcomes you want to see; then stress-test your plan by anticipating the challenges that could get in the way; and finally put in place a measurement system so you can track progress, learn from what you find, and tell your story with confidence. The tools in this section are designed to be living documents, not one-time exercises, and you will return to them throughout implementation and beyond.

Goal:

Operationalize your idea by mapping the steps to achieve impact, proactively identifying potential risks, and establishing a system to measure outcomes.

The Plays:

3.1 Map Your Journey to Impact

3.2 Anticipate Challenges

3.3 Plan to Measure

Take-away Tools:

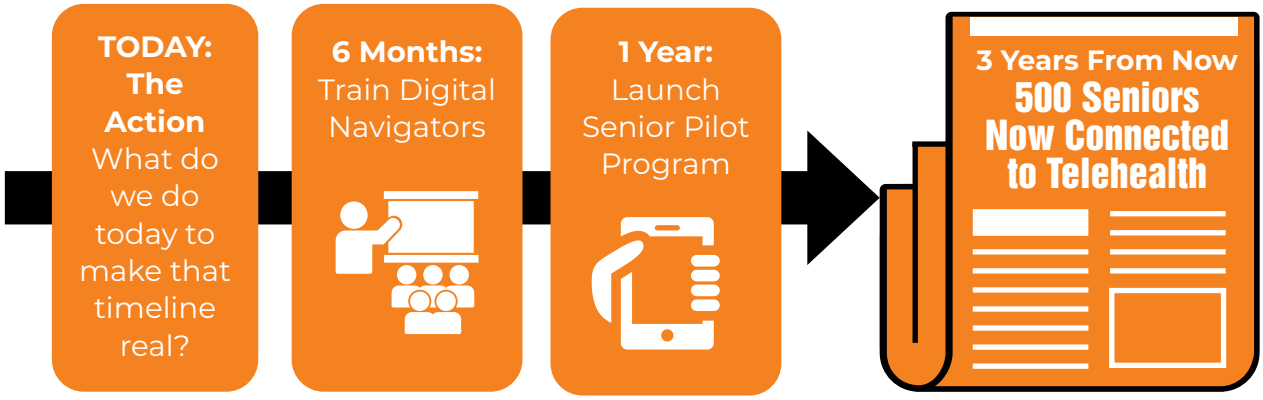
- Impact Roadmap
- Implementation Timeline
- Metrics Map

3.1 Map Your Journey to Impact

So far, our aims in the Playbook have been to help you understand your clients' digital skills needs and identify the optimal entry points to provide support. We now shift toward using those insights to define program goals and connect the dots between your daily tasks and your community impact. The planning exercises in this section will guide your eventual program delivery (4.5 From Plan to Practice) and set the stage for tracking and communicating progress (5.1 Evolve, Iterate, Improve).

THINK AND DISCUSS: Futurecast Your Story

Futurecasting is a creative way to plan your digital opportunity programming by starting at the finish line. It is useful not only for identifying the outcomes you aim to quantify and achieve, but also for defining a clear vision for your work that is easy to share with funders, partners, and your team. By first "outlining your story" and visualizing that finish line, you create the destination and milestones for your Impact Roadmap (see below).



Consider this quick exercise to turn your program outcomes into a tangible story.

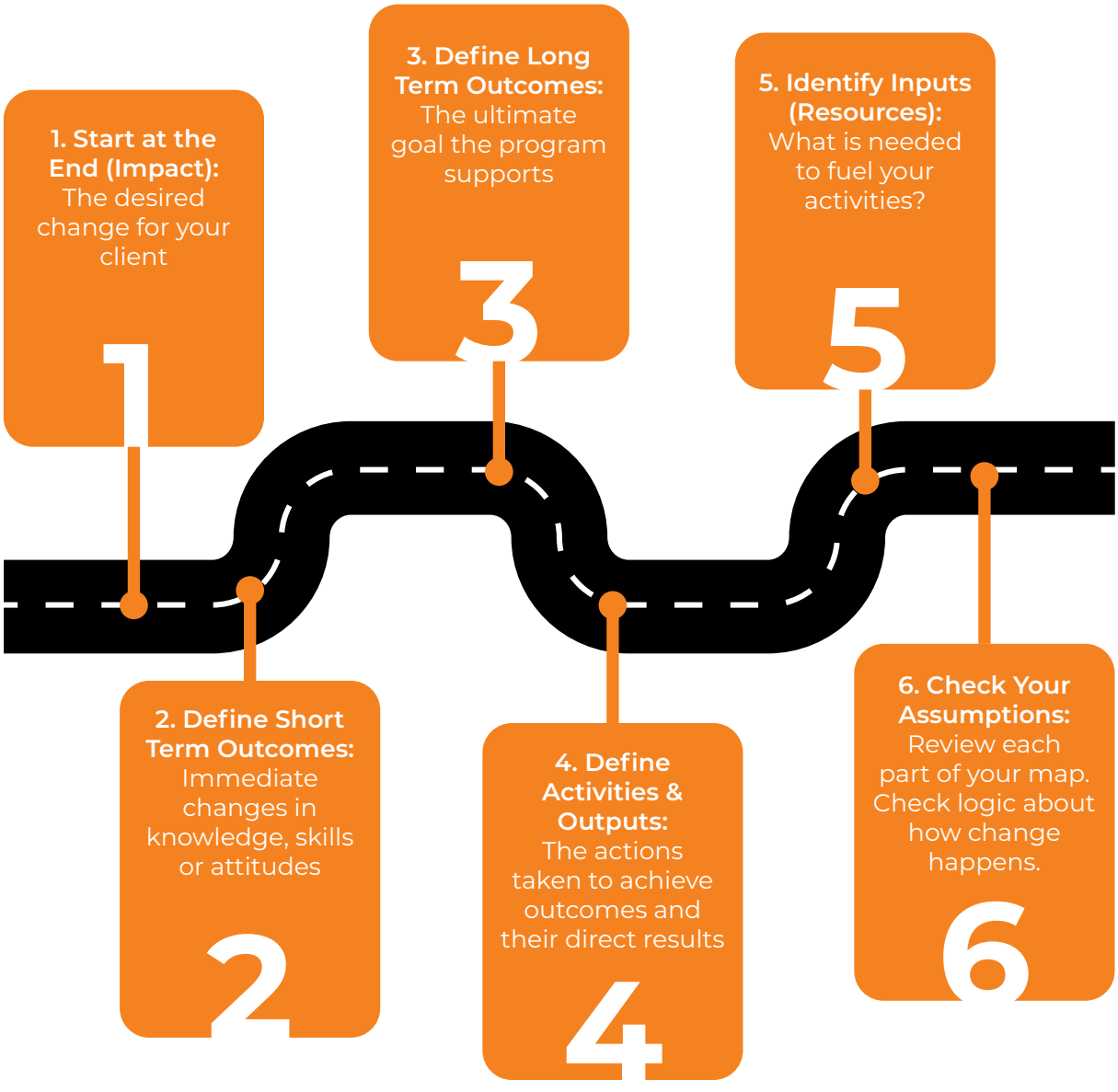
1. **The Headline:** Write the newspaper headline you want to see about your organization 3 years from now.
   Example: *"Local Organization Bridges the Gap: 500 Seniors Now Connected to Telehealth Services."*

2. **The Quote:** Write a quote from a fictional beneficiary in that story that outlines the change that matters to them.
   Example: *"I used to worry about how I would get to an appointment when my daughter couldn't drive me. Now I am able to meet with my doctor when I need to from home. I have never felt more in control of my health."*

3. **The Timeline and Interim Milestones**: Work backward from that headline. To achieve that news story in 3 years, what milestones must be hit in year 2 and in year 1? What must you be doing 6 months from now in order to hit those interim milestones and achieve that headline in three years?

Impact Roadmap

The Impact Roadmap is a simple way to connect goals you envisioned in the exercise above to your program's day-to-day activities. Also referred to as a "Logic Model," the Roadmap outlines the theoretical links between your program activities and their anticipated outcomes. Think of it as a bridge: on one side is the work you do today, and on the other is the big-picture change you want to see in your community. By mapping this out, you can clearly see how your resources and program activities "link" to specific short and long term outcomes. For fundraising and evaluation, this roadmap serves as the blueprint that proves exactly how your program creates lasting impact.



Guiding Principles for Creating Your Impact Roadmap

1. **Start at the End (Impact):** In a human-centered approach, the desired change for your client is the starting point. Before listing activities, define the specific, measurable shifts you want to see in your participants. If you are integrating digital opportunity work into existing service delivery, your target outcomes will align with the current goals of your programming. Consider the food pantry example from the sections above: if a food pantry integrates digital skill-building into its intake process, the ultimate goal remains reducing community food insecurity. In this case, the email support sessions serve as a strategic lever to advance that mission by removing technical barriers to service access (i.e., participants' inability to receive digital pick-up notifications). If you are standing up new programming, separate from your existing service delivery, consider the prompts below as you identify the short and long term outcomes you aim to achieve.
2. **Define Short-Term Outcomes:** What immediate change in knowledge, skills, or attitudes will result directly from the program? (e.g., "Participants report increased confidence using online security tools.")
3. **Define Long-Term Outcomes:** What is the ultimate life goal your program supports? (e.g., "Participants secure employment with required digital skills," "Participants successfully manage their health through telehealth.")
4. **Define Activities and Outputs:** Work backward from your Outcomes.
    - **Activities:** The actions your staff and partners take (e.g., "Host weekly digital skills workshops," "Conduct one-on-one digital navigation sessions").
    - **Outputs:** The direct results of your activities (e.g., "Number of clients who completed the Digital Navigator session," "Number of devices distributed").
5. **Identify Inputs (Resources):** What is required to fuel your activities? These are the resources you mapped out in **Asset Mapping** (1.3 Start with What You Have), including staff time, grant money, partner expertise, curriculum materials, and devices.
6. **Check Your Assumptions:** Review each part of the journey your map outlines, from beginning to end, and check your logic about how change happens.
    - Do your inputs cover everything you need to implement your activities?
    - If you conduct your activities and achieve your outputs successfully, are they likely to lead to your intended short-term impact? Are you making any assumptions about how change will happen or conditions that must be in place in order for your activities to cause your intended outcomes to come to fruition? For example, if your activity is to host a workshop on navigating telehealth portals and your intended short-term impact is that clients will be able to manage their health issues through these portals, you might be assuming that clients are able to access the portal when they need to outside of your workshop.

Outcomes Roadmap Component	Core Question	Example for a Food Pantry Digital Pivot (see 2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support)
Inputs (Resources)	What assets and resources are needed?	Grant funding for 1 part-time Digital Navigator; space/computer lab; free Gmail account sign-up materials.
Activities	What will the program do?	Digital Navigator conducts 15-minute sessions during intake to set up emails and teach reliable password creation.
Outputs	What will be delivered directly? (the count)	50 clients complete email set-up; 50 clients receive a printed, secure password record.
Short-Term Impact	What is the immediate change in client skills, knowledge, or attitude?	Clients can reliably access their email and use it to receive information from trusted sources.
Long-Term Impact	What is the ultimate change experienced or goal achieved?	Clients have increased autonomy, reducing reliance on the pantry for simple informational tasks (e.g., pickup reminders).



TIP: Your work on the earlier 2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support section is also a useful guide for your **Impact Roadmap**. The "Pivot" column is often a perfect Short-Term Outcome, and the original client pain point is the "need" your Roadmap must address.



Implementation Timeline

You're likely familiar with developing timelines and program plans for your existing work. While the **Impact Roadmap** confirms your strategy, the **Implementation Timeline** converts those goals into a chronological, actionable plan. This tool forces you to anticipate challenges (you'll do more of that in the next section, too) by setting realistic deadlines, assigning responsibilities, and ensuring that preconditions are met before moving to the next stage.

- **Phase Breakdown:** Organize your work into logical phases (e.g., Start-up, Launch, Growth). This prevents your team from feeling overwhelmed by the entire program at once.
- **Milestone Focus:** Don't just list tasks; define clear milestones (e.g., "Digital Navigator training complete," "data collection system online," "first grant proposal submitted") that prove you are on track.
- **Resource Allocation:** Look back at the inputs in your Roadmap. Ensure you have the budget, staff, and technology ready before each phase begins so you aren't overpromising or under-resourcing.



TIP: Your timeline will look different depending on whether you are *embedding* digital skills in your current work, *adapting* programs to incorporate digital skillbuilding, or *creating* a new program from scratch (see 2.2 Define Your Approach). If you're embedding or adapting, you'll want to look at your existing workplan or timeline and add steps directly to those documents to ensure alignment.

Example: Integrating Email Support Sessions into Food Pantry Services

The below table illustrates some tasks that may be included in the implementation timeline of the start-up phase of the food pantry example above. Your organization may already have a preferred workplanning template. Feel free to use your existing format to map out your digital opportunity program or to integrate these activities into your current workflow.

Action Activity	Timeline	Lead Staff/ Partner	Resources Needed
Recruit and onboard bilingual volunteer	Weeks 1-2	Program Director	Volunteer job description, outreach to local colleges, volunteer training materials and schedule
Outreach to clients	Week 3	Week 3 Outreach Coordinator	Flyers announcing email help sessions
Create materials	Week 3	Program Director	Printed instructions for free Gmail set-up or email "cheat sheets," printed password records

3.2 Anticipate Challenges

Integrating technology and digital skill-building into your programming—whether it's a one-time workshop or a long-term service—comes with a unique set of hurdles. Below are some tips to help your organization mitigate common challenges.

Test the Tech (and then test it again): Never assume the Wi-Fi will hold or the tablets are fully updated. At least 24 hours before your event, log in exactly as a participant would. Check that all websites are accessible, passwords work, and devices are fully charged.

Always Have a "Plan B": Technology is unpredictable. If the internet goes down or a software update stalls your lesson, what is your Plan B? Have a backup activity ready that doesn't require a connection; keep physical "cheat sheets" and printed instructions on hand.

Don't Assume Skill Levels: It is easy to overestimate (or underestimate) what someone knows. A participant might be an expert at social media on a phone but struggle to use a mouse or a physical keyboard. Start with a quick "check-in" at the beginning of any session to see where everyone is.

Prioritize Hands-On Support: One person leading a group of ten can quickly become overwhelmed by individual "pop-up" technical issues. Whenever possible, have assistants or "roaming" volunteers who can provide immediate, one-on-one help without stopping the flow of the entire session.



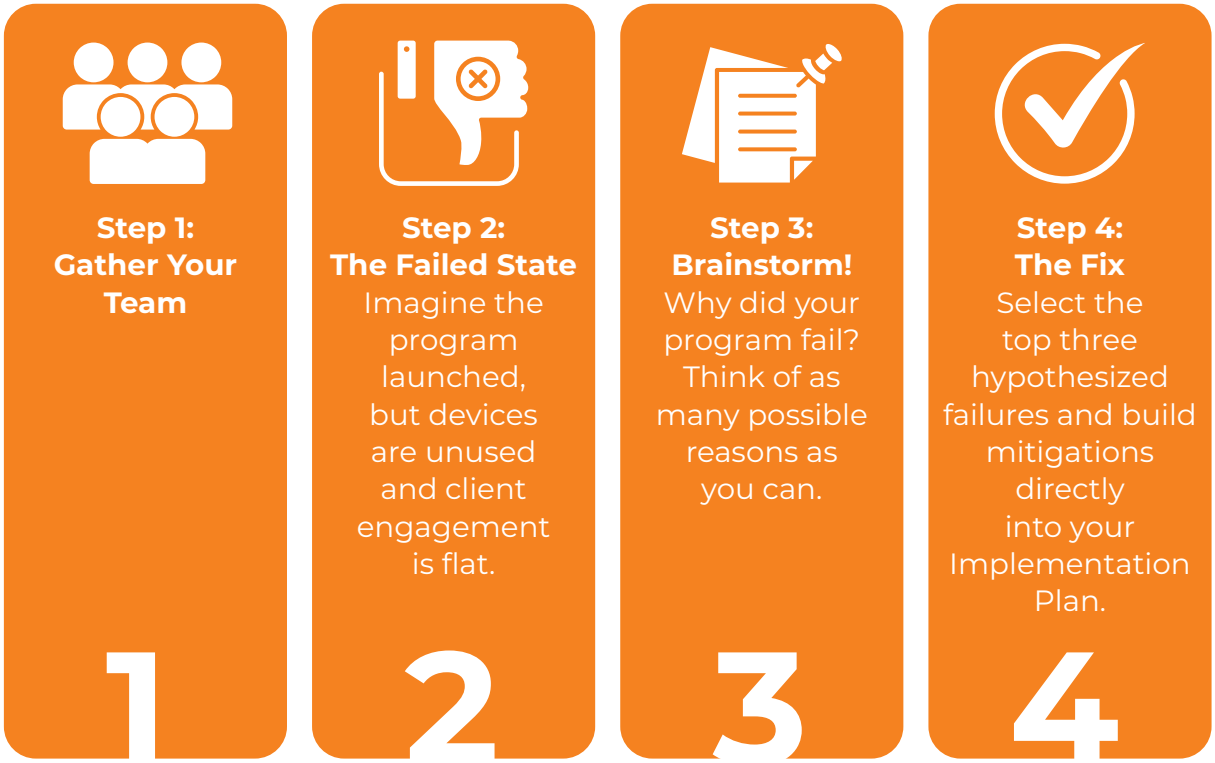
THINK AND DISCUSS: A Foresight Analysis to Mitigate Risks

One way to proactively identify risks in your plan is by working backward from a hypothetical failure. While most evaluations happen after a program is finished, a foresight analysis allows you to proactively identify risks and address them while you are still in the planning phase. The below instructions are intended to help uncover factors that could impact the success of your effort before you start. Once you do, you can go back and strengthen your plan.

Instructions:

1. **The Setup:** Gather your team. Since we'll be exploring anything (and everything!) that could go wrong with the plan, make sure to include anyone who could help identify problems or solutions. Everyone should be briefed on the plan for your initiative, either in advance or at the start of the meeting.
2. **Imagine a "What If" Scenario:** Imagine it is exactly one year from today. Your digital skillbuilding program was *not* effective. You were not able to engage a majority of clients and your devices have been rarely used. Feel free to adapt the scenario depending on your plan.
3. **The Brainstorm:** Everyone works independently for 5 minutes to write down reasons *why* the program could have failed (it can be helpful to use sticky notes). Then all members of the group should share their results.
   - ***Examples:*** "The hours were during work shifts," "The software was in English only," "The internet was too slow."
4. **The Fix:** Pick the top three causes of this hypothetical failure, and work on revising your plan to prevent these.

THINK AND DISCUSS: A Foresight Analysis to Mitigate Risks



3.3 Plan to Measure

Key to an actionable workplan is the ability to track the progress you are making as you implement your digital opportunity programming. Connecting your **Implementation Plan** actions to measurable metrics enables you to learn what is working well, or where changes are needed to improve programming (more on this in 5.1 Evolve, Iterate, Improve). A sound data collection system also lets the people you serve, your partners, and the community, in general, know the outcomes of your work. As you consider the questions in this section, keep your mission in mind, or refer back to 1.1 Align Digital Opportunity with Your Mission. Remember: the goal of measurement is to strengthen your mission and prove your impact, not just collect data for data's sake.

TIP: If "data collection" feels daunting or overly technical, remember: you are likely already doing it. Data isn't just complex spreadsheets; it is simply the information that tells the story of your program. Think client feedback, registration or attendance numbers, or "success stories" — things you might collect anyways as part of your regular program delivery or funding applications.

Reflect

- **Outcomes:** How will clients be better off as a result of your service? What skills or behaviors will change?
- **Logic Testing:** Are the outcomes logically related to and likely to result from the core program activities you will be conducting? Are your outcomes realistic and attainable given the level of intensity and duration of the program? What skills, behavior or knowledge are you expecting people to gain after receiving services?
- **Methods:** How will you measure these outcomes (e.g., surveys, observation, testimonials)?
- **Integration:** What data are you already collecting? Are there stages of your client's engagement with your programs or services that provide natural opportunities to gather data (e.g., sign-up)? How can you integrate measurement in existing workflows and systems to gather enough useful information without creating undue burden on staff, volunteers, and clients alike?
- **Feedback Loops:** How are you creating feedback loops between the program and the people served?



Map Your Metrics

The example below is based on the youth mentoring program example in the Digital Opportunity Entry Points Table (see 2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support).

Metric type	What it answers	Example Metric	Data Collection Method
Operational (Inputs)	Did we build it?	# of "Tech Check-In Night" events held for parents over a 3-month period	Staff Logs
Engagement (Outputs)	Did they come?	# of unique attendees	Sign-in Sheets
Skill Development (Outcomes)	Did they learn?	% of interested parents who successfully registered their child using the online registration form	Program Registration data
Digital Resilience (Outcomes)	Did they meet their goals?	% of parents who feel confident navigating DocuSign or similar e-signature platforms	Follow-up interviews with parents

Measurement Considerations

- **Avoid Creating Parallel Systems:** As noted earlier in 3.1 Map Your Journey to Impact, if you are integrating digital opportunity work into existing programming, your metrics should align with those you already use to track progress toward your mission. Rather than building a separate data collection system, identify how the integration of digital opportunity work can directly accelerate the outcomes you currently measure. This approach ensures that digital opportunity is viewed as a primary driver of your goals rather than a disconnected add-on.
- **Qualitative and Quantitative:** Collect numbers (attendance, devices distributed) but also stories. Qualitative data (testimonials) often reveals nuances that numbers miss and can add context to ***why*** *something is working or not*.
- **Low-Barrier Tools:** Use simple, free tools like Google Forms for surveys. If literacy is a barrier, conduct oral interviews. If digital literacy is a barrier, use paper surveys.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Treat your Implementation Plan (from 3.1 Map Your Journey to Impact) as a living document. Refine your programming based on ongoing feedback. If a class time isn't working, change it (see 5.1 Evolve, Iterate, Improve for additional guidance).



TIP: If you are embedding digital opportunity work into existing programming, you may not need new metrics at all. Look first at what you already track to measure progress toward your mission and ask whether those same indicators can capture the impact of your digital opportunity work, too. A workforce program that already tracks job placement rates, for example, can use that same metric to show how improved digital skills contributed to employment outcomes. Start with what you have, integrate where you can, and only add new measures when there is something important that your existing data cannot capture.



4. ACTIVATE YOUR STRATEGIES

Planning gets you to the starting line. This section is about what happens next. The four plays are sequenced to support effective activation: you begin by preparing your team so they feel confident and ready before they ever sit down with a client; you then establish the ethical foundations and trust practices that make your program a safe space; from there you move into the principles and approaches that make digital skills instruction effective and relevant; and finally you explore the Digital Navigator model as a flexible, client-centered framework for delivering ongoing support. At the end of this section, you will find a full "Plan to Practice" walkthrough that brings all four plays to life through the story of one organization's journey from plan to first session.

Goal:

Activate your digital opportunity strategies by preparing your team, establishing a foundation of client trust, and delivering effective and culturally responsive support.

The Plays:

4.1 Strengthen Staff Capacity

4.2 Digital Ethics and Client Trust

4.3 Effective Instruction

4.4 Digital Navigation

Take-away Tools:

- Privacy Protocol Scenario Planning

4.1 Strengthen Staff Capacity

Whether you have volunteers or dedicated paid staff, they must have the appropriate tools to support the digital skills needs of the community members they are serving. Staff frequently express a need for training and technical assistance, both for themselves and their participants, including guidance on how to better integrate resources into programming and support digital skills development.

- **Assess Skills of Staff**, ensuring that they are able to identify learning needs, offer foundational skills tailored to participants and guide participants to useful tools and programs based on their goals. One of the most widely used digital literacy assessments is Northstar Digital Literacy.
- **Provide Training for Staff** in key areas of need either internally or through an external partnership. To build their own technical confidence, staff can utilize the BRIDGES Digital Resilience Toolkit, which includes curated learning resources and guidance for teaching foundational skills and critical skills such as privacy and security. This overview of the BRIDGES Skills Framework includes a full list of skills with direct links to aligned, free learning resources. For teaching others, World Education's forthcoming digital literacy training course will offer comprehensive guidance on delivering digital skills instruction. Additionally, the Bridges Digital Resilience Toolkit features an "Empowering Practices" tab under each skill domain, providing pedagogical tips for educators. For those focused on career advancement, the Workforce EdTech tools offer support with adult learning and workforce development. Also, consider these two online courses; each is self-paced and takes approximately three hours to complete:
  - **Building a Digital Navigator Program** equips program leaders and Digital Navigators with the essential knowledge and skills needed to design effective Digital Navigator programs that foster digital opportunity for community members of all ages.
  - **Building Digital Navigator Skills** explores the Digital Navigator role in more depth, focusing on building the essential knowledge, skills, and daily responsibilities. It is designed for staff providing the functions of a Digital Navigator, regardless of their job title. Program leaders would also benefit from insights into how to support Digital Navigators in their work. For more information and to enroll: https://worlded.me/DigitalNavigatorCourses
- **Build Staff Development into Action Plans:** Revisit your implementation timeline or other planning documents for this initiative or your organization's overall programming. Consider building in staff development as an activity equally worthy of time and resources.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: Equipping staff with the right tools and training is essential for a successful digital opportunity program. At the Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund (SALEF) in Los Angeles, staff wanted to build a formal digital literacy program for first-generation Latino students but needed practical resources. Through professional development webinars, staff were introduced to SkillBlox, a free platform offering a library of open educational materials organized by subject-area standards. Empowered by this new tool, SALEF staff successfully piloted digital literacy content with their scholarship recipients. By investing in their staff's capacity to find and utilize adaptable content, SALEF was able to seamlessly integrate foundational digital skills training into their broader ecosystem of college and career support.



4.2 Digital Ethics and Client Trust

When clients come to you for help overcoming technical barriers, they may also share with you sensitive personal information. Establishing clear protocols for data privacy, security, and ethical engagement is important for maintaining client trust and protecting your organization.

Best Practices and Guidance

- **Client-First Data Policy:** Treat all client information (contact details, progress notes, personal goals) as highly sensitive. Ensure all data collection and storage practices are compliant with relevant privacy laws (e.g., state-specific rules on nonprofit data).
- **Teach Privacy, Not Just Security:** Digital resilience means understanding the *implications* of sharing data, not just setting a strong password.
- **Contextualize** (see also 2.3 Make It Local) the instruction to their lives: Teach clients what information to share with a landlord versus a job application, and how to spot a common scam.
- **Ethical Use of Emerging Tech:** As you consider using new technologies (like AI tools for scheduling or language translation), establish clear, written guidelines for staff.
  - **Transparency:** Staff must be transparent with clients when a digital interaction involves an automated tool or AI.
  - **Audit:** Before adopting a new tool, ensure it has been vetted for bias, accessibility, and cultural responsiveness, especially regarding language access needs.

- **The "No Judgment" Zone:** Train staff to respond with empathy and a non-judgmental attitude when clients inevitably experience a security incident (e.g., a scam, identity theft). Your program should be a trusted first responder, helping the client solve the problem and learn from it without shame.



Privacy Protocol Scenario Planning

Work with your team to identify potential scenarios that might involve a client's sensitive information or raise privacy issues. Talk through how you might address it in the moment with the client, necessary resources you might need to ensure privacy, and processes and policies that might help you strengthen your overall approach. You won't be able to predict every issue that might come up, but taking the time to brainstorm scenarios and responses will not only help you proactively manage risks, but also help your team feel more confident troubleshooting privacy concerns as they arise.

Scenario	Immediate Staff Action	Required Backstage Support	Program Review/Policy Implication
1. A staff member wants to use a free AI translation app on their phone to help an English language learner with an intake form.	Explain to the staff member that while the tool is helpful, data you share with the app is not secure. Ensure the client understands never to share highly sensitive information (e.g. SSN, medical or financial information) with AI.	Access to an approved, vetted translation tool or volunteer/ staff member to live translate.	Does your available software support the languages actually spoken in your community? If not, consider alternatives.
2. A client is locked out of their email and cannot access the job application they submitted yesterday.	Respond with empathy and without shame ("No Judgment" Zone). Walk the client through the password recovery process, turning it into a teachable moment about secure password management.	A secure, encrypted way for the program to (optionally) help clients store their own login "hints" (not passwords).	How much help is "too much"? Define the line between assisting and taking over a client's private account.

Scenario	Immediate Staff Action	Required Backstage Support	Program Review/Policy Implication
3. A client comes in panicked because they clicked a "phishing" link in a text message and think their identity is stolen.	Validate that these scams are professional and hard to spot. Help them change passwords or contact their bank.	A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for data breaches and a list of local identity theft resources.	Use this as a case study for a future workshop on how to spot and respond to phishing scams.
4. A client uses a program computer to file their taxes or access medical records.	Remind the client to log out and "forget" the network. Ensure the staff and client know how to clear the browser cache after using the computer.	Software that automatically wipes user data/ downloads after each session (e.g., Auto Clear Browsing Data Chrome extension, or similar).	Put clear signage near devices explaining that "Public computers are not 100% private; please log out of all accounts."

4.3 Effective Instruction

To ensure your programs meet the evolving needs of clients in a digital world, you'll want to use engagement and instructional strategies that are both effective and relevant. You know your clients best and likely already have a number of go-to strategies you've found useful. If you're less familiar with instructional best practices, the following principles outline a learner-centered approach to digital skills development. By following this framework, you can help reduce the barriers your participants face, build their technical competence, and validate their skills through real-world application. Be sure to check the Resources section at the end of the playbook for more in-depth guidance on instruction and assessment.

Meet Learners Where They Are

Address logistical barriers by integrating digital support into existing services. Instead of requiring participants to seek out a tech center, offer point-of-need support during housing intake, food distribution, or health appointments. Consider providing services at non-traditional locations like laundromats or food pantries to reach clients who cannot attend formal sessions.

Contextualization and Relevance

Embed skill-building into goals relevant to learners' lives, such as careers, health, and family. Use non-digital outreach, like flyers at schools or religious centers, and engage trusted "community ambassadors" to build buy-in.

Asset-Based and Targeted Instruction

Recognize that many learners already possess foundational skills, such as mobile phone navigation. An **asset-based approach** builds on these current strengths and diverse life experiences. Rather than a one-size-fits-all curriculum, use individualized instruction and "skill boosts" to fill specific gaps based on assessments of existing knowledge.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: An asset-based approach to digital skills recognizes that learners already possess valuable life experiences and problem-solving abilities. When JB, a retired mechanic, visited the Salvation Army Ray & Joan Kroc Corps Community Center in Atlanta, he viewed the internet as something "other people used." However, he wanted to email his grandson and learn more about car repairs. A patient instructor started with simple lessons: opening a browser and setting up an email address. Because JB already had a lifetime of expertise from his career, he quickly applied those strengths to the digital environment. Within minutes, he was independently looking up car repair tutorials on YouTube. By framing technology around his existing passions and skills, the center sparked his independence rather than fostering dependency.



Focus on Digital Resilience

Move beyond teaching specific apps; instead, emphasize transferable skills and a flexible mindset. Demonstrate real-time digital problem-solving to help learners tackle new technologies independently. The goal is to build self-efficacy so they can troubleshoot future tech issues on their own. Utilize "Learning Circles" or peer-supported study groups to reduce tech anxiety and build community trust, allowing learners to support one another's growth.

High-Quality, Adaptable Content

Utilize Open Educational Resources (OERs) that are multilingual and culturally relevant. Platforms like SkillBlox allow staff to facilitate instruction that is easily tailored to the specific linguistic and cultural needs of your community.

4.4 Digital Navigation

Depending on your mission, your clients, and your resources, you may want to consider a "Digital Navigator" model.

What is a Digital Navigator? According to NDIA, a Digital Navigator is a "trusted guide" who assists community members with "ongoing, individualized support for accessing affordable and appropriate connectivity, devices, and digital skills."

A Digital Navigator program model is a comprehensive approach to achieving digital opportunity. A key advantage of this model is its flexibility in how, where, and when services are delivered, as well as who provides them. Digital Navigators, who can be trained staff or volunteers, help individuals secure affordable internet, access devices, and complete the foundational digital literacy training that they need to meet their goals. This support can be provided through various channels, such as phone calls, virtual hotlines, workshops and classes, or drop-in sessions. Foundational digital skills and digital literacy may be offered directly by the Navigators or through referrals to other programs.

Digital Navigator programs connect trusted Digital Navigators to clients, so that those clients can get support to meet their individual goals, whether related to learning, employment, service access, or personal goals.

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: The Cherokee Nation's Digital Navigator program in Oklahoma brings the model to life in a vivid way. The program's Navigator is a lifelong member of the community he serves, and that shared identity is central to why clients trust him enough to ask for help in the first place. The support is deeply personalized and delivered wherever it is needed, whether through drop-in hours at a dedicated learning center, one-on-one sessions with elders, or outreach to families across the reservation. The assistance provided spans the full range of what Digital Navigation can look like in practice: connecting a tribal elder to affordable internet so her pacemaker data could reach her doctor remotely, helping job seekers navigate online applications, and supporting students with devices and basic skills. Far from a single channel or a fixed curriculum, the approach flexes to fit each person's goals and circumstances, which is exactly what the model is designed to do.



TIP: If the term "Digital Navigator" is new to you, it may seem intimidating to think about a new role or program, but if you are already helping clients overcome technology barriers, navigate the digital world, and connect to resources, you're already doing a lot of the work of digital navigation!

From Plan to Practice: What Activation Looks Like

Reading through four plays is one thing. Seeing how they connect in a real program is another. Below is a walkthrough of what activation looked like for a career center that embedded digital opportunity support into its existing job readiness services. The names and details are illustrative, but the sequence and decisions reflect patterns we have seen across many programs in the Connected Learning Center network.

The Organization: A career center serving adults seeking employment, many of whom are career changers, recent immigrants, or returning to the workforce after a long gap. The center already offers resume help, mock interviews, and job search coaching.

What the planning revealed: Through their digital friction analysis, staff identified that clients were consistently stumbling at two points: filling out online job applications, which required navigating unfamiliar portals, creating accounts, and uploading documents, and communicating professionally by email, which many clients had limited experience with. Their asset mapping showed they had two bilingual staff members with strong digital skills, a small computer lab used only during morning hours, and an existing relationship with the local community college's IT department.

Getting the team ready: Before launching anything client-facing, the program director brought the two bilingual staff members together for a half-day preparation session. They worked through the Northstar Digital Literacy self-assessment to identify their own gaps, practiced walking through a mock job application together, and role-played a scenario where a client got frustrated and wanted to give up. They also agreed on a shared set of norms: no taking over the mouse, no finishing sentences, and always narrate what you are doing so clients can follow along.

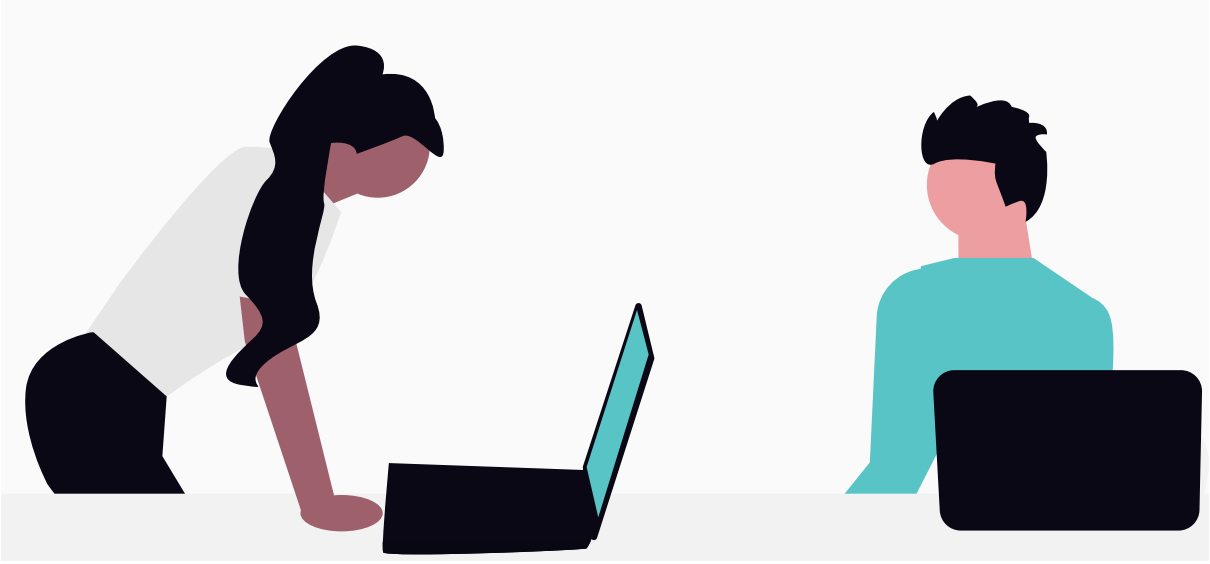
Setting up the delivery model: The center decided to start small: two drop-in sessions per week in the computer lab, each two hours long, offered in the late afternoon when the lab was otherwise unused. They printed simple instruction sheets for the most common tasks (setting up a Gmail account, saving and uploading a PDF resume, and filling out a standard online application) and made them available in English and Spanish. They tested every device and the Wi-Fi connection the day before the first session and identified that one laptop had an outdated browser that needed updating.

The first sessions: Turnout in the first week was modest, three clients on Tuesday and five on Thursday. Staff resisted the urge to fill the time with instruction and instead started each session with a simple question: "What's the one thing you most want to be able to do online by the end of today?" Answers ranged from "send my resume to a job I found" to "stop my daughter from having to help me every time." Those answers shaped the entire session for each person.

One client, a man in his late 50s returning to work after a health leave, had never used Gmail. By the end of the session he had set up an account, sent a test email to the staff member, and saved his login information in a printed record he could take home. He came back the following week.

What they kept in mind: Staff noticed quickly that the drop-in format worked well for clients who already had a specific task in mind, but felt overwhelming for clients who were starting from the very beginning. They flagged this in their first monthly review and added a brief optional "orientation" at the start of each session for first-time visitors, a ten-minute walkthrough of the computer and basic navigation before diving into individual goals.

What they would tell another organization: Start with the entry points your clients are already hitting. Don't build a curriculum and then look for clients to fill it. Find the moment where your client is already stuck and be useful there first. Everything else grows from that.



5. ITERATE, IMPROVE AND GROW

Running a program is just the beginning. This section is about what you do with what you learn. The three plays in this section are connected by a simple thread: the organizations that make the biggest difference are the ones that keep getting better and keep making the case for their work. You start by establishing a regular rhythm for reviewing data and refining your program based on what you find; then you learn how to translate your outcomes and client stories into compelling narratives that resonate with different audiences; and finally you build a sustainable funding strategy that diversifies your resources and positions your program for the long term. Together, these plays help you move from implementing a program to leading a lasting effort.

Goal:

Understand participant outcomes, use data to improve programming and capture and share stories of impact using low-barrier methods.

The Plays:

5.1 Evolve, Iterate, Improve

5.2 Share Your Story

5.3 Sustaining Efforts: Funding and In-Kind Support

Take-away Tools:

- Audience and Key Messages Matrix

5.1 Evolve, Iterate, Improve

The Implementation Timeline you developed as part of your work on 3.1 Map Your Journey to Impact is dynamic and your programming should be changed or refined based on ongoing feedback and program data. This sub-section ensures that your program remains relevant, effective, and resilient to changing community needs by periodically reviewing aspects of your program that are working well, and those which may need to be adjusted.

Establish an Iteration Cycle

The first step in continuous improvement is to set a regular, mandatory schedule for program review that is appropriate for your team's capacity (e.g., monthly, quarterly). The key is consistency. This cycle should be explicitly tied to your Implementation Timeline. For example, anticipating a data review after the completion of key program activities or ahead of planning for a new program cycle.

- **Data Review:** Review your Mapped Metrics to identify patterns. Are participants completing the program? Are short-term outcomes (e.g., increased confidence) being met? If not, where is the drop-off?
- **The "Why" Analysis:** Go beyond the "what." Use your qualitative feedback (from client interviews or surveys) to understand why the data looks the way it does. For example, if a metric is low, is the "why" a logistical barrier, a staff training gap, or a flaw in the curriculum design?
- **Prioritize a Single Change:** Based on the data, identify the single most critical change you can make in the next cycle. Avoid trying to fix everything at once. Focus your resources on the high-impact adjustment.

Turn Friction into a Feature

The original **digital friction points and opportunities** you came up with earlier (2.1 Identify Entry Points for Digital Opportunity Support) gave you an early hypothesis. Now, your implementation data can confirm or challenge that hypothesis. Any point of program failure or client struggle should be viewed not as a mistake, but as an opportunity for design improvement.

- ***Example:*** If your data shows a high dropout rate after clients receive their loaner device, the "Pivot" is insufficient support for device setup.

→ **Iteration:** The next cycle must incorporate a mandatory 30-minute one-on-one device setup session with the Digital Navigator.

- ***Example:*** Staff surveys reveal low confidence in troubleshooting a specific software.

→ **Iteration:** Use the 4.1 Strengthen Staff Capacity strategy to add a targeted training module on that software to improve staff confidence and comfort.

Close the Loop with Your Community

Your clients are the experts on their own lives, challenges, and experience. To fully co-design (2.3 Make It Local), you must show your community members how their feedback led to a tangible change. This practice reinforces trust, validates the community's role as partners, and fosters a deeper sense of ownership over the program's success.

- **Feedback-to-Action Communication:** When you implement a change based on client input, communicate that action back to the community. (e.g., "Thanks to feedback from our advisory committee, we have changed our workshop hours to better accommodate client availability.")

THE PLAY IN ACTION

THE PLAY IN ACTION: In the case of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Wake & Johnston Counties highlighted earlier for partnering to offer an online driver's education course, the Club began with a small-scale pilot. In the first two weeks, 16 Club members completed the course using the club's computers and internet—resources many didn't have at home. This metric, along with interest from other members, gave the organization's leaders a clear picture of both the impact and the relevance of the initiative. What began as a pilot quickly gained momentum. The driving school was so impressed with the program's early success that they committed to an ongoing partnership and the program has continued to give teens a reliable space to take a meaningful step toward employment and independence.



5.2 Share Your Story

Communicating the profound impact of your work is essential to sustaining and growing your programs.

Identify Your Audiences and What They Care About

As a first step, identify the different types of people you want to communicate with and map out the different things they care about. When you're immersed in your day-to-day work and seeing success, it's easy to think that others will be just as excited about your success as you are, but identifying the different motivations and values of the people you're trying to reach—whether funders or potential clients—can help you adapt *how* you tell your story to ensure you meet people where they are with the messaging that will be most motivating to them.

Audience and Key Messages Matrix

The below matrix gives examples of different kinds of stakeholders, their priorities, and ways to adapt and focus your message. The guidance below is general; when you create your own version, the more specific you can be in each column, the better.

Stakeholder	What they care about	Key Messaging Focus
Funders and Donors	Outcomes and Return On Investment (ROI)	Emphasize long-term results like job placements, housing security, and how your program is a cost-effective solution.
Community & Clients	Relevance and Trust	Focus on relevance, accessibility and safety. Answer the questions: “Is this program for people like me?” and “Is it a trusted space?”
Partners & Potential Partners	Collaborating for joint impact	Highlight mutually beneficial opportunities; show that you are trusted by the community and have access to client populations that partners may also want to reach, or can help them better serve clients they already have.
Policymakers	Potential for Scale and Systemic Change	Highlight how your model can be expanded and how it addresses the digital divide at a structural or community-wide level. Even if your work happens on a smaller scale, you can demonstrate that your approach and impact have the potential to be replicated by others or scaled with additional policy or funding support.

Share Your Impact

By framing your data and narratives thoughtfully, you can powerfully demonstrate your value to every stakeholder—from the client who gains new confidence to the funder who seeks systemic change.

- **Tell stories!** Human beings are wired for stories. The most effective way to communicate impact is not through abstract statistics (though some stakeholders do want those!), but through narratives that center on an individual client's journey to build and benefit from digital resilience.
  - **Important:** Always obtain explicit, informed consent for sharing client stories, photos, or quotes. Ensure the story is told authentically, honoring the client's voice and context without making them a spectacle of their need.
- **Focus on the "Before and After":** Use your pre- and post-program data (e.g., in surveys or interviews) to build a clear contrast. Don't just report the number of people served; describe Sandra's transformation from being locked out of her email (digital friction) to confidently applying for a better job online (digital resilience).
- **Choose the Right Medium:** A personal, 60-second video testimonial might be more effective than a 10-page report for a social media campaign. A well-designed infographic is perfect for quickly communicating your impact to a board of directors.
- **Humanize Numbers:** Numbers are still important for showing impact, but use them wisely. Every number you report represents a real change in the life of a person. To humanize data, you must bridge the gap between a cold statistic and the person or group it represents. You can breathe life into your numbers with the following strategies:
  - **Emphasize impact, not outputs.** Simply listing outputs ("20 workshops held," "50 laptops distributed") without connecting them to client outcomes ("50 people now able to apply for benefits online") is a common mistake that fails to demonstrate real impact.
  - **Frame percents as people:** Instead of saying 10%, you can say "1 in 10 people."
  - **Connect numbers to stories:** Combine big picture statistics with an individual human story to show both the breadth of a problem (or your impact) and the depth—the rich, nuanced, and emotional impact of your work. For example you might say: *85% of our participants reported increased confidence in using online portals this year* (the breadth). *For someone like David, this meant finally being able to message his doctor independently to manage his prescriptions after years of relying on others* (the depth).
  - **Turn barriers into triumphs:** Shift the focus from what participants lack to what they have gained. Reframe a "deficiency" (like a lack of skills) into a story of "agency" and "independence." For example, instead of saying: *60% of our senior participants initially failed the basic internet safety pre-test*, say: *While 60% of our seniors initially felt vulnerable to online scams, 3 out of 5 now report they feel 'in the driver's seat' when navigating the web.*

Case Study Planning Template

Use this tool to draft a narrative that bridges the gap between your program's "numbers" and its real human impact.

1. The "Who" (The Client or Community)

- **Name (or Pseudonym):**
- **Background:** (What was their situation before they joined your program?)
- **The Specific Barrier:** (What was the barrier or instance of digital friction they were encountering? e.g., couldn't apply for jobs, felt isolated from family.)

2. The "What" (The Intervention)

- **Program Touchpoints:** (Which specific services did they use? e.g., 1-on-1 Digital Navigator support, a laptop from the device bank, or a 4-week skills course.)
- **The "Aha!" Moment:** (Describe a specific moment when things clicked for them. What was the first thing they successfully did on their own?)

3. The "So What?" (The Impact)

- **The Result:** (What is the "Triumph"? e.g., they got a job, they saved $30 on their internet bill, they managed their own health records.)
- **The Emotional Shift:** (How has their confidence changed? Use a quote if possible. *"I used to be afraid to touch the computer; now I'm the one helping my kids."*)

4. The "Big Picture" (The Data Bridge)

- **The Breadth:** (Connect this one story back to a larger statistic. *"David is just one of the **45 residents** who gained digital independence this quarter."*)

5.3 Sustaining Efforts: Funding and In-Kind Support

Achieving true digital opportunity requires long-term commitment. Your impact data and compelling client stories (from 5.2 Share Your Story above) are the raw materials for a successful and sustainable fundraising strategy. The goal here is to diversify your revenue streams so your vital work is not reliant on a single source.

Match Your Story to the Funder's Strategy

- **Funders are Investors:** View potential funders (foundations, corporations, or major donors) not as sources of charity, but as investors in a solution to a problem they care about.
- **The Problem-Solution-Impact Loop:** Clearly articulate the loop, connecting:
  - **The Problem:** the digital friction and its effect on your client population (look back at your notes from 1.2 Identify Client Needs and Goals).
  - **Your Solution:** the program model or approach you designed and implemented.

- **The Impact/ROI:** the measurable outcomes and human stories (from 5.2 Share Your Story). Use the language of the funder (e.g., workforce readiness, community stability).

- **Segment by Scale:** Start by identifying small, immediate wins (local community grants) while simultaneously researching and building relationships for larger, multi-year national foundation grants.

Identifying Potential Funding Sources

- **Maximize Existing Funds:** Advocate for explicit permission and guidance on using federal (e.g. WIOA, TANF, SNAP E&T) and state funds for digital opportunity activities, device purchasing, and professional development.
- **Seek New Investments:** Engage in discussions around state or municipal-level grants to secure funding for digital skill-building programs and capacity building.
- **Leverage Private-Sector Partnerships:** Frame digital literacy as a strategic cost-saving measure rather than a charitable request to emphasize how it reduces future onboarding and remedial training expenses. Leverage this alignment in funding asks to persuade private-sector partners that investing in digital infrastructure today secures a more profitable, workforce-ready community tomorrow.
- **Flexible Funding Models:** Advocate for models that support drop-in workshops and general support, rather than solely contact-hour-based reimbursement.

Diversify Funding Sources (The Sustainability Matrix)

Source Type	Target Strategy	Key Asset to Lead With
Corporate Grants	Target companies with vested interests in your work (e.g., technology, telecom, banking, or major local employers). Position your program as training their future employees or customers.	Data on digital skills gained by clients and how it relates to in-demand job skills.
Government Grants	Research federal (e.g., NTIA, Dept. of Education, Housing), state, and local funding streams related to digital literacy, broadband, workforce, or education. These often require a detailed **Impact Roadmap** and metrics.	Your detailed **Impact Roadmap, Implementation Timeline,** and **Impact Metrics** that prove your model's fidelity and effectiveness at scale.
Individual Giving	Leverage your client success stories to connect emotionally with small and major donors. Focus on the trans-formation from dependence to digital resilience. Use your social media channels to host targeted campaigns.	Powerful, short client testimonials (following the advice in 5.2 Share Your Story) and clear "ask" statements.

Source Type	Target Strategy	Key Asset to Lead With
Private Foundations	Identify foundations whose missions align with specific social determinants (e.g., economic mobility, education). Showcase how your program serves their priority subpopulations by removing digital barriers to their primary goals.	Evidence of deep community impact and demographic data that proves your success in reaching their specific priority populations.
Earned Revenue	Explore fee-for-service options with other agencies or employers (e.g., offering staff training for their Digital Navigators, or providing culturally responsive digital skills curriculum).	Your staff's expertise and your tested curriculum models.



TIP: Don't forget the power of in-kind support, particularly for costly expenses like replacement devices. Cost-sharing or donations of devices, free/discounted connectivity, or pro-bono technical support from local businesses that have a vested interest in community digital skillbuilding will free up funds for core program delivery.



In-Kind and Partner Resource Assessment

Use this simple exercise to expand your view of what resources are available beyond cash grants:

Current Program Need	Required Resource (Specific Item)	Potential Strategic Partner (Review 1.4)	Status/Next Step
Need replacement devices	6 refurbished or new laptops	Tech corporation or local business	Inquire about "end-of-life" hardware cycles for donation/ refurbishment
Need better internet connectivity	10 Hotspots per month	Local library system or Internet Service Provider (ISP)	Schedule meeting with ISP Community Relations Director

Current Program Need	Required Resource (Specific Item)	Potential Strategic Partner (Review 1.4)	Status/Next Step
Need technical support to bring devices online	IT set-up and device refurbishment services	Local high school/ vocational school or community college	Contact IT/ Computer Science Dept. regarding student support as part of volunteer hours or capstone projects
Need a physical space for workshops	Use of a large conference room	Local community college or church/ community center	Draft a formal partnership proposal
Need staff expertise development	4 hours of cyber-security training	Local bank or corporate IT department	Ask a contact from your notes in the Engage Employers section (1.4 Explore Partnerships and Collaboration) for a referral.

A FINAL NOTE

You made it to the end of the playbook, and we hope it feels less like finishing something and more like having a clearer sense of where to head next.

This work is not ours or yours; it is something we are building together. World Education has been privileged to work alongside hundreds of organizations across the country, and what we have learned has come from people exactly like you: the case managers, program directors, volunteers, and community members who show up every day with creativity, dedication, and deep knowledge of the people they serve. This playbook is a reflection of that collective wisdom, and it gets better every time an organization like yours puts it into practice and shares what they learn.

Your community already has so much going for it. The trust you have built, the relationships you have nurtured, the deep understanding of what your clients need and what they are capable of—these are the ingredients that make digital opportunity work stick. The strategies in this playbook are simply here to help you put those strengths to work in new ways.

So start where you are. Try one play. Bring your team together around one entry point. Have one conversation with a potential partner. The path forward does not have to be dramatic to be meaningful, and every step you take creates the foundation for the next one.

We are in this with you, and we cannot wait to see what you build!

RESOURCES

The resources included here supplement guidance provided in the sections above.

1. Review and Discover

For examples of large-scale community assessments and surveys:

- **Digital Access and Skills Survey:** This community needs assessment from Digital Lift includes questions about internet and device access, digital skills, technology use, and training needs. Organizations can adapt the questions to better understand community needs and inform program planning.
- **Internet Use Survey:** This survey was proposed by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in November 2023.
- **Checklist for evaluating your vision:** These questions were designed for states developing plans to improve digital access, skills, and opportunity, but they may be helpful for your organization to review to reflect on your own planning and visioning process.

2. Ideate and Strategize

For more guidance on digital opportunity program development:

- **NDIA's Program Manual:** Pages 39-56 of this guide provide more information on different service delivery approaches and considerations for location selection, staffing and staff capacity building.
- **Community Planning Guide:** This guide from North Carolina includes a customizable template and questions to help communities assess needs, identify partners, and develop strategies to improve technology access and digital skills. While it focuses on community planning, it may be a useful resource for program development.

3. Plan for Success

For more guidance on planning for Digital Navigator approaches:

- **Digital Navigator Playbook:** This comprehensive guide from Digital US details the steps and considerations as programs and systems set up or improve their Digital Navigator services.

4. Activate Your Strategies

For additional resources to support digital opportunity instruction and digital skillbuilding of staff and clients:

- **Digital Navigation Courses:** These two free online training courses from World Education equip staff providing the functions of a Digital Navigator with essential knowledge and skills needed to design and deliver effective digital opportunity programs in a range of organizational settings.
- **Digital Literacy Action Plan Tools:** This toolkit by World Education provides links and resources for implementers to differentiate digital skills instruction and promote learner agency.

- **Workforce EdTech Tools:** This growing collection of impactful technology tools by World Education helps guide instruction in adult learning and workforce development settings.
- **Digital Skills Library:** This open repository of free learning resources by World Education is designed to help your clients develop the digital skills needed to achieve their goals.
- **AT&T ScreenReady**: This site includes resources, tips and tools to help people of all ages, from children to seniors, build confidence using technology, practice healthy digital habits, stay safe online, and participate in today's connected world.

5. Iterate, Improve, and Grow

For further guidance on measuring and communicating impact:

- **Learning for Action Better Results Toolkit:** Drawn from the experiences of environmental organizations, but with relevant application to organizations of various types, this step-by-step guide helps organizations capture and use data to drive continuous program improvement.
- **NDIA's Impact Aggregator:** This collection of linked toolkits, manuals, datasets, and evaluation resources from NDIA is designed to help organizations, governments, and coalitions measure, plan, and improve digital skills programs.
- **Evaluating Community Programs and Initiatives:** This resource from the University of Kansas Community Tool Box provides practical guidance on gathering feedback, monitoring progress, measuring results, and using what organizations learn to strengthen their programs and services.

ABOUT US

JSI is dedicated to strengthening health and education systems to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities. We believe all people should have what they need to live their healthiest lives and reach their full potential. To accomplish this, JSI works hand-in-hand with government agencies, community organizations, and the private sector to design pragmatic strategies for complex problems. We drive measurable impact in public health, health care, and education to enhance the well-being of people in the United States and around the world.

World Education, a JSI initiative, has spent over 70 years developing and advancing learning solutions that are community-rooted, person-centered, and designed to reduce disparities. We believe that learning is the foundation of opportunity, and that everyone deserves access to high-quality education that meets them where they are. As an integral part of JSI since 2023, we promote learning opportunities across the lifespan, from early childhood to adult learning, and across diverse avenues from formal education to community-based pathways.

We work with governments, civil society, and community partners to co-create comprehensive, high-quality learning opportunities that build on the strengths of the communities we serve, focusing on foundational, digital, and language literacies that help learners thrive in a digital world. Our teams support communities to promote safe, healthy, and dignified lives by mobilizing leaders, caregivers, and youth to co-design learning pathways and overcome barriers to education and livelihoods.

In the US, our initiatives support learners to develop transferable skills for work, life, and civic participation. We align learning with real-world opportunities through partnerships with workforce systems, employers, and educational institutions. The Connected Futures Playbook is one expression of this commitment: a practical resource born out of years of partnership with community-based organizations across the country, designed to help more communities unlock the power of digital opportunity.



AT&T connected LEARNING CENTER®

WORLD EDUCATION
A JSI INITIATIVE

44 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210
www.jsi.org/worlded