

Building Digitally Inclusive Communities

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE PROPOSED
FRAMEWORK FOR DIGITALLY
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES



What is digital inclusion— and why does it matter?

Digital Inclusion is the ability of individuals and groups to access and use information and communication technologies. Digital inclusion encompasses not only access to the Internet but also the availability of hardware and software; relevant content and services; and training for the digital literacy skills required for effective use of information and communication technologies.

The National Broadband Plan, released by the Federal Communications Commission in March 2010, noted that “absent action, the individual and societal costs of digital exclusion would continue to grow.” The Plan’s recommendations included a call to the Institute of Museum and Library Services to provide leadership to libraries and community-based organizations as they improve digital adoption and use. The Proposed Framework for Digitally Inclusive Communities is IMLS’s initial response to that request.

PRINCIPLE 1: Availability and affordability

Communities need reliable and affordable access to broadband technology infrastructure in order to be fully engaged and competitive in today’s information-based world.

PRINCIPLE 2: Public access

In a world connected by technology, all people, regardless of income, need access to information and communication technologies in order to be fully engaged members of society, both economically and socially.

PRINCIPLE 3: Accessibility for people with disabilities

Communities should ensure the full participation of all their members, by embedding accessibility to digital technology for people with disabilities throughout their institutions, processes, and public awareness efforts.

PRINCIPLE 4: Adoption and digital literacy

Beyond having access to technologies, people, businesses, and institutions need to understand digital technologies and how to use them effectively to achieve their educational, economic, and social goals.

THE VISION

**ALL PEOPLE, BUSINESSES,
AND INSTITUTIONS WILL
HAVE ACCESS TO DIGITAL
CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGIES
THAT ENABLE THEM TO CREATE
AND SUPPORT HEALTHY,
PROSPEROUS, AND COHESIVE
21ST-CENTURY COMMUNITIES.**

PRINCIPLE 5: Consumer education and protection

Consumers—both individual and institutional—need accurate, unbiased information to understand the technology options available to them, including how to buy and maintain equipment and how to safely navigate the digital world.

PRINCIPLE 6: Education

Educational institutions should ensure that students have the digital skills to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow, and to reap the potential rewards of lifelong digital learning.

PRINCIPLE 7: Economic and workforce development

Technology is a powerful engine of innovation and economic growth in today’s world. For individuals and businesses to succeed in this environment, communities need to foster the mastery of 21st century skills and encourage use of technology for economic development.

PRINCIPLE 8: Civic engagement

Residents should be easily able to interact electronically with community institutions, government agencies, and one another, to participate actively in community affairs.

PRINCIPLE 9: Public safety and emergency services

Communities can increase their emergency responsiveness through effective deployment of digital technologies, ensuring the public the best possible emergency preparedness.

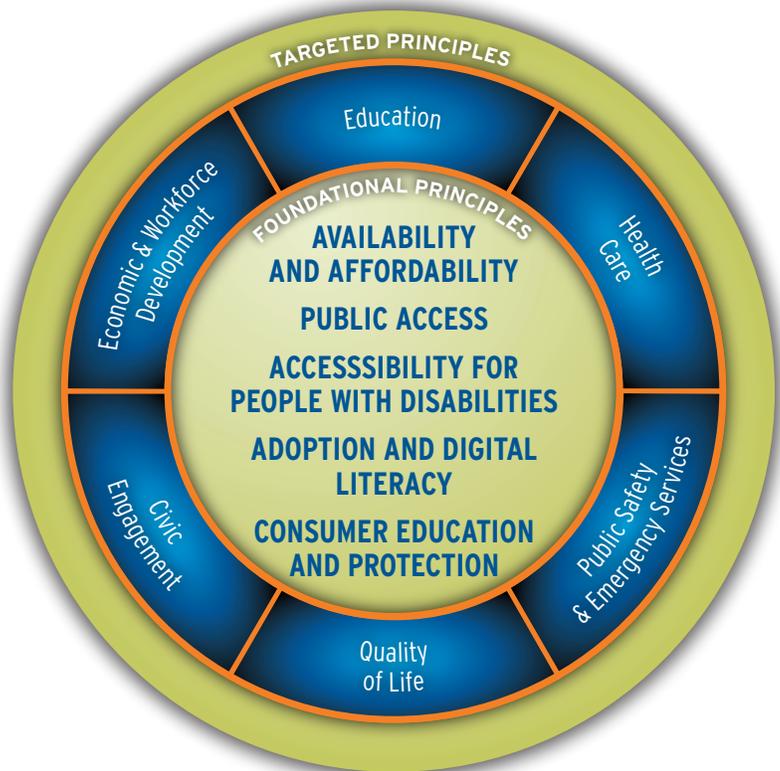
PRINCIPLE 10: Health care

Communities should have the digital technologies necessary to support the health care needs of their populations, especially in areas with limited health care facilities, to afford all their members access to the best possible health care.

PRINCIPLE 11: Quality of life

Individual members of a community should have access to technologies that promote social engagement and the pursuit of productive and creative interests.

THE PRINCIPLES



Getting Started on Digital Inclusion

Every community will take its own path to become digitally inclusive. But certain steps will be similar for any community-building effort. The creation of a digitally inclusive community requires involvement across all sectors of the community—and any of them can provide leadership and be a catalyst for action.

1. Convene stakeholders

- The local government
- Public agencies, especially the public library
- Non-profit community-based organizations
- The business community
- Residents, individually or representing neighborhood or housing associations.

2. Develop a shared community understanding of digital inclusion

- What does the term digital literacy mean for the community?
- What digital technologies are currently available, and to whom?
- Where are the gaps? Who is left out and at risk of being left behind?
- What are the most important community goals of digital inclusion: economic development, education, job training, health care, social connection?

An initial “needs assessment,” based on systematic data collection and analysis, can lead to a shared vision of where the community wants to be in a technology-driven world.

3. Create a community action plan

Create a community action plan anchored by the shared vision (as detailed in the Framework Report) – with specific goals, measures of success (or “benchmarks”), timelines, and assignment of responsibility.

4. Implement the plan

Implement the plan by generating the needed resources – drawing on government appropriations, business contributions, philanthropy, or some combination of these sources. Create some early successes that can be celebrated to create awareness and build momentum.

5. Evaluate and revise the plan

Digital devices and transmission capabilities, workforce requirements, economic drivers, and population demographics are all constantly changing. As circumstances change, implementation plans must change as well.

Learn More

Building Digitally Inclusive Communities: A Guide to the Proposed Framework (Institute of Museum and Library Services, May 2011). *Proposed Framework for Digitally Inclusive Communities: Final Report* (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2011). The Report explains how the Framework and Guide were developed, and gives details about the principles and goals. It outlines next-stage “expanded goals” for the principles as well as sample strategies for each goal, and includes a comprehensive bibliography arranged by subject area.

Final Report: www.ims.gov/pdf/DIC-FrameworkReport.pdf
Guide: www.ims.gov/pdf/DIC-FrameworkGuide.pdf

ABOUT THE PARTNERS THAT DEVELOPED THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK



The **Institute of Museum and Library Services** is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute’s mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit www.ims.gov.



The **University of Washington** Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School explores the design, use, and effects of information and communication technologies in communities facing social and economic challenges. With experience in 50 countries, TASCHA brings together a multidisciplinary network of social scientists, engineers, and development practitioners to conduct research, advance knowledge, create public resources, and improve policy and program design. Our purpose? To spark innovation and opportunities for those who need it most.



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, advances professional local government worldwide. Our mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management to create sustainable communities that improve lives worldwide. ICMA provides member support; publications; data and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to nearly 9,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA’s members affect millions of individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.