Building Digital Communities:
A framework for action

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THE VISION FOR DIGITAL COMMUNITIES:

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

Each community will benefit from harnessing the potential of technology to address its most pressing needs and those of its members

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 cost of digital exclusion is great. Without access, full participation in nearly every aspect of American society — from economic success and educational achievement, to positive health outcomes and civic engagement — is compromised.

What does digital inclusion mean for people in a community?

- All members understand the benefits of advanced information and communication technologies.
- All members have equitable and affordable access to high-speed Internet-connected devices and online content.
- All members can take advantage of the educational, economic, and social opportunities available through these technologies.

By choosing to implement the Framework, communities demonstrate commitment to the overall vision and the work of individuals, libraries and other community-based organizations, businesses, and local governing bodies towards reducing the barriers that prevent people from participating in digital life.

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What is the Building Digital Communities framework, and how can it help my community?

Vision — Describes a digitally inclusion community as it is experienced by residents

Principles — Statements of intention in foundational and targeted areas

Goals — Specific achievements required to achieve the vision

Strategies — Actions to achieve the goals within a community context

Building Digital Communities provides a resource to help communities chart a course toward improving digital inclusiveness — toward expanding the economic and social opportunities provided by digital technology to all its members. The Framework consists of four components:

1. Vision for the future
2. Principles that define digital inclusion
3. Goals to make digital inclusion a reality
4. Strategies for achieving the goals

Principles: Statements of intention

Thirteen principles comprise the backbone of the Framework. Principles are statements of intention that state the rationale for focusing efforts in the areas most important for making the entire community digitally inclusive now, for planning for the future, and for identifying areas where special effort will be required. The principle statements

- Are fundamental propositions that support specific goals
- Can be considered "mission statements" that further embody the vision statements
- Classify aspects of the vision statements into actionable areas

The thirteen principles are divided into access principles, adoption principles, and application principles. Access principles address the infrastructure a community needs to have in place in order to provide opportunities to benefit from digital life. Adoption principles look to overcome individual barriers that make use of broadband technology less likely, even when access is available. Finally, the application principles look at specific purpose areas where the thoughtful deployment of broadband technologies can enhance the economic success of communities and the lives of their residents.

Access

Availability
Affordability
Design for inclusion
Public access

Adoption

Relevance
Digital literacy
Consumer safety

Application

Economic & workforce development
Education
Health care
Public safety & emergency services
Civic engagement
Social inclusion

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