nten
Building Connections to Change Lives

DIGITAL INCLUSION FELLOWSHIP COHORT 7

NTEN's seventh cohort of Digital Inclusion Fellows (DIF) was comprised of an impressive group of people passionate about bringing digital equity to their communities.

Throughout the year-long fellowship, these 15 individuals from across the U.S. set ambitious goals for themselves and their communities, providing support with internet access, devices, and digital literacy skills. In addition, they worked diligently to meet their communities where they were, prioritizing community involvement in their programming every step of the way. As a result, fellows launched programs uniquely designed to serve their communities, from helping formerly incarcerated individuals find employment to supporting recently arrived immigrants and refugees in using online maps to navigate their cities.

These incredible nonprofit staff, hailing from libraries, housing organizations, workforce development agencies, and many other institutions, collectively served nearly 5,000 individuals, trained over 1,000 staff and volunteers in digital inclusion, and provided over 20,000 training hours to their communities. Additionally, they grew as professionals, presenting to local coalitions, building partnerships, and earning their Digital Equity Professional Certificates. We are incredibly proud of the fellows and invite you to read about their work in the following spotlights.

DIF by the Numbers

How the fellows brought digital equity to their communities

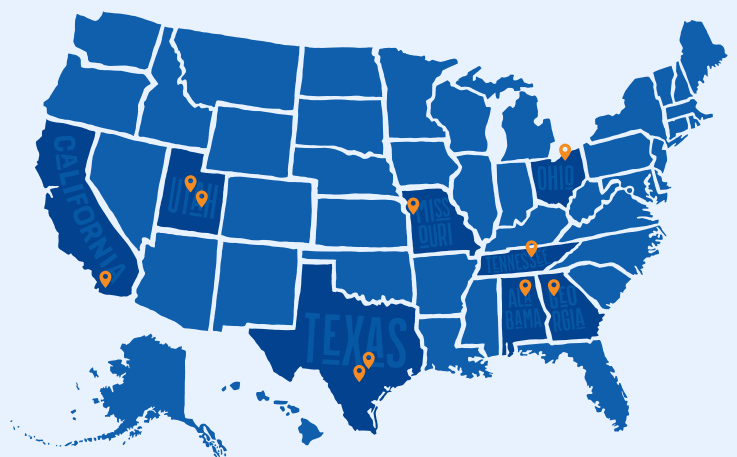**20,165** Training Hours

4,950 Unique Participants

2,015 Devices distributed

1,364 Volunteers and Staff Trained

Where our fellows live and work

ASSET MANAGER
Neighborhood Concepts, Inc.
Huntsville, AL
Pronouns: she/her

Ashlee oversees the more than 1,000 units in Neighborhood Concepts's affordable multifamily portfolio. In this role, she engages with third-party management, performs property risk analysis, coordinates resident service activities, and oversees regulatory compliance. Ashlee brings strong organizational and marketing skills to her role with Neighborhood Concepts. Away from her computer, you can find Ashlee planning her next road trip and spending time with her family and friends.

Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I was able to distribute nine devices, set up 70 residents with more affordable broadband access through Google Fiber, and provide basic skills training to our residents. Neighborhood Concepts was also able to form new partnerships that will continue to help our residents become more familiar with digital literacy. One new partnership will provide 70 families with free access to Parent Parties Engage, an app that helps families be more involved in their child's educational development.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
The project has definitely changed the way Neighborhood Concepts approaches digital inclusion work. Importantly, the project increased our capacity to serve more people in our community.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
I've become more aware of the digital inclusion problem in the community.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
Neighborhood Concepts has helped over 300 residents learn about digital literacy and how the organization can help. We are working on expanding basic skills trainings to all our properties and will continue to distribute devices to more people.

The yearlong Digital Inclusion Fellowship provides nonprofit professionals with the knowledge and training they need to expand digital equity and literacy in their communities.

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Ricardo Reinoso

DIGITAL INCLUSION MANAGER

Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority
Cleveland, OH
Pronouns: he/his/él/su

Ricardo is committed to building a bridge to opportunity through digital inclusion. Before joining Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, Ricardo graduated from the Cleveland Neighborhood Leadership Development Program and founded The Cleveland Dinners, an event series committed to confronting racism and building equitable communities through facilitated dialogue. Ricardo lived in Washington D.C., where he worked at the International Monetary Fund and was a Neighborhood Commissioner. He has a bachelor's degree from Washington University in St. Louis and is currently working towards a Master of Science in urban studies at Cleveland State University.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I developed a basic digital literacy course for older residents at the housing authority's Quarrytown property. Although residents had long asked for this resource, it hadn't been offered in five years. Thanks to a donation by PCs for People, we gave each participant a refurbished desktop computer so they can continue their digital journey. We also rekindled a partnership with Baldwin Wallace University to recruit student volunteers for the classes. Residents at Euclid Beach and Beachcrest properties could also take a basic digital literacy course through our partnership with Greater Collinwood Development Corporation and Ashbury Senior Computer Community Center, known as ASC³. These residents also received computers, courtesy of PCs for People and RET3. We also conducted a campaign to bring more residents online and onto our platform cleveland.digitallearn.org. This grew the number of online participants from 41 to 130.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
We've gotten an unprecedented number of residents online affordably with in-home internet. Our goal is to provide all our low-income public housing residents — nearly 10,000 people — with affordable internet by 2023. This will allow us to do more training onsite and give residents with internet-ready devices a way to continue their computer literacy and workforce training online, access telehealth services, work remotely, and let their kids do their homework online.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
This project, and more specifically this fellowship, has equipped me with management and organizational skills, as well as tools I use to bring structure to the digital inclusion initiatives I oversee. I can now step back and see more fully how my digital inclusion work fits into the big picture, reminding me that every effort I make to close digital divides must be done with mindfulness and intention.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
I've been part of an effort to get more housing authorities connected to digital inclusion partners in the hope that they'll form local coalitions. I've served as a principal housing authority representative on the Greater Cleveland Digital Equity Coalition, which we collaborated with to form the Cleveland Digital Navigators program. I've also been the lead representative on the countywide Digital Equity and Adoption Working Group, which is tasked with requesting Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act state funding and allocating it to advance digital inclusion efforts on the county level.

DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Goodwill of Western Missouri and Eastern Kansas
Kansas City, MO
Pronouns: she/her

Katherine has been with MoKan Goodwill for over four years and a part of the Goodwill network for over ten years. She has master's and bachelor's degrees in public administration from Texas State University. She is also a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer and an AmeriCorps Alum. Over the past three years, the MoKan Goodwill team partnered with Goodwill Industries International and Google to launch a series of digital skills training efforts in the Kansas City metro area, and are looking to expand these services to eliminate digital divides in the Kansas City community.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I positioned the organization to be more intentional about how we offer digital inclusion services. We launched the Goodwill Mobile Workforce Unit, an RV retrofitted as a computer classroom, equipped with desktop computers, workstations, Wi-Fi, a printer, and presentation screens. We've used it to offer digital skills trainings, job fairs, and in the parking lots of service providers that don't have a computer lab. Our team expanded the variety and frequency of digital skills trainings at Goodwill locations and five partner locations that had computer labs but no instructor. We've leveraged grant funding to buy laptops for people and helped them apply for home internet programs. Over the past twelve months, we've supported over 500 people with digital inclusion services.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
We're more intentional about approaching our participants' digital access challenges starting at enrollment. By asking questions about participants' digital access and skills, we've become better equipped to meet their needs. All our participants are job seekers who need to use devices and online platforms to update resumes, search for jobs, and submit applications. Without these tools they'll continue to face challenges accessing employment opportunities, much less the chance to further their education or develop skills through credential training courses, many of which are offered online.

How has this project contributed to your professional development?
This project highlighted the need for achieving digital inclusion in our community. Once we started to collect data about participants' digital access at enrollment, we learned about 73% did not have device access and 75% did not have internet access. Of those with device access, 65% only have a smartphone, not a laptop or tablet. Of those with internet access, 62% have access to a hotspot, not broadband. We're using this information to advocate for governmental and grant support to address these significant digital divides.

How has your work contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
Our digital inclusion work has built and strengthened partnerships with Healing House, Veterans Community Project, ReDiscover, City Union Mission, the Heartland Center for Behavioral Change, the Transition Center of Kansas City, NCircle in partnership with the Johnson County Adult Residential Center, and St. Luke's United Methodist Church. These partners have welcomed MoKan Goodwill to offer digital skills trainings. By expanding our reach, we've grown the support we need to provide more people with opportunities to become proficient with using computers.

TECHCENTRAL ASSISTANT MANAGER

Cleveland Public Library
Cleveland, OH
Pronouns: he/him

In addition to his role at the Cleveland Public Library, Matthew is an instructor at the Ohio Options Program for Cuyahoga Community College. He has a Bachelor of Science in business administration from Lake Erie College in Painesville, Ohio, and a master's in adult education and training from the University of Phoenix. Matthew has worked in the library's TechCentral Department where he interacts with patrons and teaches computer classes. He is passionate about looking deeper into his learners' struggles with the digital divide to help them overcome those challenges.

Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I was able to reimagine our computer classes and transform them into My Digital Life, a human-centered, growth mindset-based approach to teaching digital skills. Our classes were regularly attended and attracted more than 55 students. Feedback from attendees has indicated that the new approach has been well received, with more than one individual saying, "I am really learning the computer!"

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
This project has changed how we look at our patrons and their approach to learning. We've been able to capture patrons who were uncomfortable about working with technology, helped ease their discomfort, and change their viewpoints enough to build higher computer self-efficacy.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
It has strengthened my resolve to continue in my path and has shown me that I'm a leader and innovator in this field.

MY DIGITAL LIFE
Tech Skills for Everyday Life

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
I was able to present to the Cleveland community about digital inclusion and highlight the library's programs. I also participated in National Digital Inclusion Alliance and was pleased to present a session called "Loop Until Yet" at NTEN's Nonprofit Technology Conference about the approach we've taken to engage our learners.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR AND MEDIA SPECIALIST

**Ashbury Senior Computer Community Center
Cleveland, OH**
Pronouns: she/her

Gina has 10 years of consumer electronics and digital inclusion experience, including three years owning a small, senior-focused technology services company. Her experience is complemented by her Comptia A+ certification, as well as her educational background in engineering and business.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I set out to do two things at Ashbury Senior Computer Community Center, also known as ASC³: roll out our Grow with Google curriculum and help establish and lead the Digital Navigator program. The Grow with Google program started small, though the program offers a ton of material. I dissected the offerings, mixing the most relevant workshops and resources into our curriculum. I realized that, instead of only looking for new enrollment for Grow with Google, it could be folded into all our classes, enhancing class offerings and increasing the number of people served. I'm now leading Digital Navigators from around the city, not just at ASC³, and helping navigator programs in other parts of the country. As the program goes beyond the fellowship, we expect to transition it into a permanent program.

How has this project changed your organization's approached to digital inclusion work? Has its capacity increased to serve more or new people?
Both programs have greatly enhanced ASC³'s offerings. Not only have they increased the capacity, they've also improved the quality of partnerships within the city of Cleveland. The city had never collaborated on this level to offer one-on-one technology help and direct connections to free or low-cost computers and internet access. The addition of an exclusive curriculum provided by Google has significantly decreased the work needed to distribute essential information to the community. Parents of school-aged children, workforce candidates, and youth interested in technology are now all within our reach.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
I'm looking at everything from a project planning point of view. Getting a high-level timeline and making small goals, along with being flexible and resilient, are the most important things I'll take away from this experience. While I understood the importance of partnerships before, this project has shown me just how quickly a bleak-appearing situation can turn around when the right partner steps in at the right time. I'll carry that with me always and continue to develop my partnership and rapport-developing skills.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
The Digital Navigator group, assembled and trained by the Digital Ambassadors, has contributed the most to the digital inclusion sector locally. Laying our foundation for this program has also helped programs get started in other places, including Columbus, Ohio, and Hawaii. Each of the locations of the 14 Digital Navigator grant applications I reviewed will also have been impacted by my contributions. Lastly, I recommended two people apply for the fellowship, and they've been accepted into the next cohort! The work fellows do is already changing our communities for the better

STAFF WRITER
City of South Salt Lake
**South Salt Lake, UT**
Pronouns: he/they

Lucas helps the City of South Salt Lake develop the Community Opportunity Center, which is a coworking space and tech hub for residents and grassroots organizations. Born and raised on the Wasatch Front, Lucas has a keen passion for promoting prosperity in his local community. He has a history working in LGBTQ+ activism and founded the nonprofit Project Rainbow in 2018. Working with the City of South Salt Lake, Lucas is striving to address disparities by providing residents with technology and skills to thrive in the digital world.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital ITell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I launched Tech Connect for the City of South Salt Lake in November 2021. It's a program that provides residents with free one-on-one tech support and help getting low-cost devices and internet service. Tech Connect employs volunteer digital navigators who meet with residents at the Columbus Community Center on a drop-in basis, helping to address their unique digital needs. Residents can bring in their device to get help with a technical problem or learn skills that align with their personal goals. Additionally, we partnered with Tech Charities, a nonprofit computer refurbisher, to have low-cost computers on-site available for purchase. Tech Connect participants can access free internet at the Columbus Community Center through a Comcast-sponsored Lift Zone. If participants want to sign up for affordable home internet service, our digital navigators walk them through the application process for Internet Essentials, the Affordable Connectivity Program, or both. During the fellowship year, Tech Connect served more than 100 people. The program has a lasting, personal impact on many households and engaged people that previously had not participated in city programs. It also catalyzed other digital inclusion efforts, including a city-wide digital equity plan.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
Tech Connect is the City of South Salt Lake's first digital inclusion program. It has uncovered the extent of digital distress in the city and has informed the city's digital equity plan. Tech Connect has also reached households that hadn't previously participated in city programs. While the city has robust youth programming, this program helped the city connect with households without children.
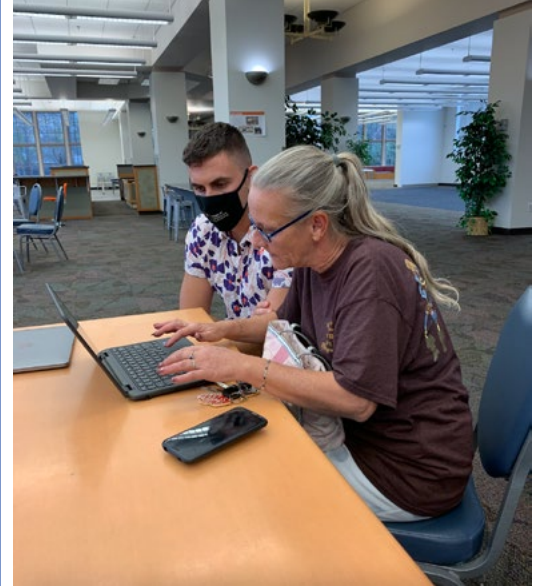
How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
The fellowship and the project have been incredibly illuminating. Through NTEN's workshops and working one-on-one with Tech Connect participants, I've come to realize how much digital distress exacerbates economic, health, and other disparities. With this new lens, I now work to ensure that city events and outreach are accessible by all residents, no matter their level of digital access.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
Through Utah Communities Connect, I've shared what I learned from the fellowship and my project with other practitioners throughout the state. I've been able to share some of what I've learned with cities and organizations involved with Utah Communities Connect as they launch their own programs.

DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS
Inspiredu
Atlanta, GA

Oneisha's life motto is "Work Hard, Do Good." For the past 15 years, Oneisha has been able to combine a passion for education, technology, and creativity with a calling to serve Atlanta's most under-resourced communities. Oneisha leads Inspiredu's partnerships strategy and program development and also supports marketing and outreach.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.

I developed and implemented the Digital Champions program, our city's first digital navigator program. The Digital Champions volunteers help our programs and services run smoothly. They support our learners, who participate in three-hour virtual digital skills classes each month. We supported 1,098 people with digital literacy training and distributed 1,163 laptop computers to families who needed them most. These families also received one year of technical support from Inspiredu. We expanded our digital skills classes to provide training to Afghan refugees in Pashto language, and laptops, internet access, and technical support.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?

The Digital Champions program has allowed us to reach more people through workforce development and corporate partnerships. First, we've seen our own capacity to serve grow significantly. We can also collect data about our customers' digital literacy levels and what services they need. This helps us target our efforts and focus on serving those who need our help most. Second, we've built partnerships with companies that want their employees to become digital champions and learn how they can help make a difference. It's increased corporate social engagement and is a way to connect companies to us beyond just giving funds. They have a tangible way to stay involved in the work. The Digital Champion is now a part of our organization-wide volunteer engagement and retention strategy.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?

As I learned about digital inclusion and the lack of social mobility in Atlanta, I was struck by just how far behind we are. This project has inspired me to focus on this topic and push for more growth at the state level. The fellowship was an incredible experience that has changed how I think about this work and contributed significantly toward my personal and professional development, and that of our entire Inspiredu team. Through the monthly fellows meetings and connecting with the course instructors, I was able to share progress on our projects, work through blockers, and provide feedback. This allowed me to reflect on what worked or didn't and hear feedback from others.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?

I'm very proud of my work. As a fellow and on the Inspiredu team, I've helped grow our local and national impact. I've shared my thoughts on local TV and in print news, and at local and national events. This has helped my coworkers learn about how to use technology to increase access for everyone in our community. In addition, I've been able to help our CEO, staff, and board understand the language of digital inclusion and how they can apply it in their work. The more people know about the issues facing under-served communities, the more they can do to help solve them.

Pearce Barringer

COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR

Project Return
Nashville, TN
Pronouns: he/him

Since joining Project Return, a nonprofit that helps people live a full and free life after incarceration, Pearce has worked directly and indirectly with participants to help with their reentry efforts. He graduated from the University of Alabama where he earned degrees in communication, philosophy, and political science. Pearce previously worked as a graduate teaching assistant for the Alabama Forensic Council.

Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.

I developed and implemented the Digital Literacy Hard Skills Course, prioritizing people who are formerly incarcerated and recently released. These classes taught dozens of Project Return's participants basic digital skills and, upon graduation, offered free devices so they could continue their digital skills journey on their own. Additionally, these classes allowed Project Return to begin to create a digital literacy community in our area. I was able to recruit five team members on our staff and a local volunteer to help our participants navigate through their classes. During the duration of this course, we conducted outreach to market the course through our other programs, such as prison in-reach, South Side Supper community events, hiring events, and more.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?

One organizational goal was the ability to market more digital jobs to our participants — and thankfully, we've been able to do that. Providing access to digital work is necessary, but supplying the tools and knowledge to take advantage of that access must come first.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?

It has forced me not to take any portion of my digital knowledge for granted. Things like typing my name, finding the power key, or even turning on a computer seemed so commonplace that we assumed we would not have to teach them. Literacy work must not overlook the absolute basics.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?

The Nashville digital inclusion community is not an extraordinarily vibrant one. While an organization or two does exist, they are not always active and engaged. Being able to meet a community need — that is, digital literacy work — has allowed us to take a sort of founding role in the city's small but much-needed digital inclusion community.

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nten | Angelina M. Cortes

LIBRARIAN II ADULT SERVICES

San Antonio Public Library
San Antonio, TX
Pronouns: she/her

Angelina's work at San Anonio's Central Library revolves around researching knowledge gaps of adults in technology and continuing education fields. Currently her training consists of basic computer literacy courses as well as assistance connecting folks to social services in the area. She believes the role of public libraries should be an open-for-all community-driven model that welcomes and advocates social change in all of its services.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.

I developed and nurtured partnerships with two local community organizations. I prioritized digital literacy and awareness training for internal staff and for the community. My partnership with the San Antonio Museum of Science and Technology to obtain access to NorthStar Digital Literacy administrator access. This access helped staff familiarize themselves with what basic computer literacy looks like and how they can teach these skills to their patrons. I collaborated with another NTEN fellow in Austin to implement the Get Connected program with the San Antonio Food Bank, where the public library taught basic computer literacy classes to a new cohort of 20 clients each month for more than 7 months. Additionally, the public library and food bank were able to combine funds to purchase new devices to give to the students in each cohort. The Get Connected program has evolved from a year-long project into an ongoing operation.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?

This project has resulted in the much-needed awareness that a digital equity program manager is needed — and that process is underway. The program with the food bank has reached over 100 individuals. Other digital inclusion projects I was a project manager on have reached over 300 individuals and provided hundreds of one-on-one sessions of computer literacy training.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?

NTEN and the Digital Inclusion Fellowship have positively impacted my personal and professional life. I've found my niche and my passion in the digital equity realm. I'm able to holistically understand and implement all that I've learned into my daily work structure. The project with the food bank helped me hone my project management and community engagement skills, and I've really learned how to speak to organizations about the importance of digital literacy and how the library is helping our community.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?

I've made myself known in the digital inclusion community in San Antonio. This was a goal of mine, considering that COVID made a lot of libraries close down and we lost a lot of our regular programs and patrons. I've had conversations with the Office of Innovation Digital Inclusion through Affordable Connectivity Program workshops, and the Digital Inclusion Alliance of San Antonio through Senior Planet from AARP and San Antonio Digital Connects. I was also asked to be a part of the library's Digital Equity Steering Committee, which is spearheaded by our administration and other library leaders involved in emerging technologies

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Spy Hop Productions
Salt Lake City, UT
Pronouns: she/her

Teri is a community builder with more than 20 years of project development, non-profit, and grants management experience, focused on collective impact and increasing opportunities for multicultural communities. She is a founding member of the Promise South Salt Lake Equity Council and a founding board member of 1520 Arts. Teri is currently the director of community and government initiatives for Spy Hop Productions, a nationally recognized creative youth development organization offering in-school, after-school, youth-in-care, and satellite digital media arts programming.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I worked with our community coalition to launch the Tech Liberation Project, or as we fondly call it, the TLP. The TLP began with the onset of the pandemic in 2020. The project's primary goal is to distribute tech devices throughout the state of Utah to those who need them without any cost. The TLP collects donated laptops and desktops from residents and corporate partners. Teen volunteers test and refurbish these devices through a formal internship program. Finally, the devices are distributed back into the community and volunteers train recipients to use the devices.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
The fellowship project greatly expanded our scope and knowledge of digital inclusion work. What began as a grassroots response to the need for devices became a popular internship program for teens. The fellowship gave us the tools, resources, and community of practice that empowers youth to contribute solutions to growing inequities. Through the effort of the interns, the TLP greatly expanded the number of the available devices for low-income community members. The program is poised to not only sustain these efforts, but undoubtedly continue to grow.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
The TLP is a gratifying project. I appreciate the opportunity to take a small idea for solutions to growing disparities in our community and leverage the collective effort of teens and the digital inclusion community to exponentially grow that effort. I welcome the community of practice that the fellowship fosters. I plan to create similar settings for future community projects in and out of the digital inclusion space.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
In addition to the TLP program, the fellowship helped me develop more vital leadership skills. I contributed my knowledge of community organizational development to assist our regional digital inclusion workgroup with capacity building and succession planning. We hope to build the organization's foundation by sustaining long-term digital inclusion efforts in our city across all sectors.

DIGITAL EQUITY SPECIALIST
Catholic Community Services of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT

Ali moved to Utah from Iraq in September 2012. He came to the U.S. as a refugee after living for two and a half years in Turkey as a median country before resettling finally in the U.S. Ali has a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of Baghdad. He's been with Catholic Community Services since 2015, where he started as a job developer after serving as a volunteer. Ali loves art, animals, city sights, visiting new places, and making new friends, and is passionate about helping people.

Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I developed and implemented a program that helps refugees and immigrants access technology by providing them with free digital devices (mostly Chromebooks), free or discounted home internet service, and training on the basic technology skills they need in their day-to-day activities. The main purpose of the program was to provide tools and guidance to our current clients to enable them to join the fast-paced technology lifestyle that we live in nowadays. We taught technology skills including using GPS, opening a bank account, and using apps to navigate the healthcare system.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
Since the program started, it has become essential in the way it has affected our clients' lives. It has added extra value to our refugee resettlement program and, as a result, a wider community benefited from the program. We're continuing the program to serve even more people.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
This was the project I always dreamed of — a program where I could help the community by digitally educating them and providing all the resources they need.

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DIGITAL EQUITY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

City of San Diego
San Diego, CA
Pronouns: she/her

Kelsey's efforts support stakeholders across San Diego, including community leaders, organizations, and city departments in their mission to close the digital divide. This includes developing digital literacy and device distribution programs, community outreach initiatives, and a rollout of public Wi-Fi. Kelsey has a background in bioethics with a focus on the ethics of technology. She is a former Killam Fulbright Fellow and was a Students for Economic Justice Fellow at the Center on Policy Initiatives. Kelsey studied sociology and critical race theory at California State University San Marcos.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.

My project focused on device access. A primary goal of this project was to connect residents and nonprofits to low-cost computers by incorporating a pathway to device ownership into the budding Digital Navigator and digital literacy programs, along with public library offerings. The project's central question, "What is the role and potential impact of local government in the device refurbishment and distribution process?" gradually led to, "How can local government work to cultivate a healthy device ecosystem?" The most successful facet of the project was the total integration of device access into city programming. Digital Navigators logged over 100 client contact hours in one month, with many of those hours spent helping clients acquire and use a computer, but barriers remained due to the $50 device cost. Much of the year was spent assessing then establishing the city's role in device access, and laying down critical infrastructure, doing relationship building, and learning essential lessons. The city is primed to accomplish two critical goals: dramatically increase the number of computers accessed by residents and the number of computers donated by organizations to refurbishers. Computers2Kids is applying for grants to remove the $50 device cost so financial barriers no longer stand in the way of device ownership. The city is planning a marketing campaign about the benefits of donation. Ultimately the city is committed to doing the long-term work to cultivating a healthy and sustainable device ecosystem.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?

This project pushed the city to incorporate device access as a key component of our digital equity programming. Before this, device access was treated more as an afterthought and there was no formal process in place or partnerships for the city Digital Navigators to tap into. Now Digital Navigators are formally trained on the steps to connect a resident to a computer and to assess their specific needs. The project has increased the capacity of the city and local refurbishers to connect more residents to low-cost devices.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?

I've reevaluated how I approach relationship building in this space because cooperation was more complicated and nuanced than I'd anticipated. I didn't foresee the bureaucracy which needed to be planned for and navigated through, and how much effort is actually involved in a government initiative. The fellowship cohort opportunities were the most rewarding part of this experience. I had the chance to listen to the progress and perspectives of others, enrich my network, and learn from experts in the field.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?

The project has been a catalyst to increasing the optics and positive perception of refurbishment and device access locally. The Promise Zone, Sherman Heights Community Center, Housing Commission, and other partners have focused more of their attention and efforts on device access. Additionally, the SANDAG Get Connected campaign and regional taskforce that the city partners on has highlighted device access.

PROGRAM MANAGER
Feeding Texas
Austin, TX
Pronouns: she/her

Elizabeth provides support services and technical assistance to Community Partner Food Banks as part of Feeding Texas's SNAP outreach contract with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. She previously served as the senior program coordinator for the Middle School Matters program at Communities in Schools of Central Texas, as the program coordinator for the Community Partner Program at the Texas Association of Community Health Centers, and as a certified school counselor in a rural elementary school in North Carolina. She holds a Master of Science in social work with a focus in community administration and leadership, and a Master of Education with a focus in school counseling.

The yearlong Digital Inclusion Fellowship provides nonprofit professionals with the knowledge and training they need to expand digital equity and literacy in their communities.

nten.org/dif

Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
In collaboration with the San Antonio Public Library and the San Antonio Food Bank, we created a digital inclusion program called Get Connected. It linked food bank clients to the technology, resources, and skills they needed to access social supports, including SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, and food bank programming. Participants either attended a class or got one-on-one help with internet and computer basics, such as how to use online resources like YourTexasBenefits.com, where people apply for and manage social service supports. Classes were provided in English and Spanish with the assistance of the library. Participants got help applying for low-cost internet through the Affordability Connectivity Program. They also received free laptops, either refurbished or bought new through funding from Google Fiber and the library. This was a successful pilot that will be made into a toolkit for Texas' network of 19 food banks, with the hope that each will incorporate some digital equity into its work.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
Others on the Feeding Texas team and in our wider food bank network have realized the value of ensuring that our clients get help accessing the systems we use to provide food and other social service supports. As a result of this greater understanding, Feeding Texas has incorporated digital inclusion language into its strategic plan. The plan acknowledges that, in order to achieve our mission to end hunger in Texas, we must meet clients where they are and help bridge the gap between our services being available through online systems and our client's lack of computers, internet, and skills within their homes.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
This experience provided me with the knowledge and resources to continue building on this work in the food bank system. With support from current and alumni fellows, NTEN guidance, and the fellowship learning opportunities, I feel better able to highlight the necessity of connecting our current equity work with digital equity.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
I hope we've made headway in the food bank sector to include digital equity work as a standard of practice. As more social service supports are accessed through online systems, we leave behind entire groups of people who need assistance when we fail to bring digital inclusion activities to the table. I'll continue making good trouble to keep this subject front and center in our work.

SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER FOR ADULT EDUCATION

Foundation Communities
Austin, TX
Pronouns: he/him

Emmanuel Zapata was born in Puerto Rico, raised in Germany, and has called Austin home for the past 20 years. He has more than 10 years experience managing a wide variety of programs at Foundation Communities. Most recently, Emmanuel focused on internal and external digital literacy, English as a second language, and immigration work. In his spare time, Emmanuel enjoys traveling, learning new technologies, and spending time with friends and family.

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Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.
I created an onboarding process with our human resources department to help new employees navigate the software that is integral to our work. We trained 49 new staff members in this new process. We taught digital literacy to our English as a second language students, other students, and residents throughout the year. We were able to reach more than 276 students and provide 200 residents with new laptops. With the support of Google Fiber, we'll provide 50 more laptops along with classes that will cover everything from resume building to basic computer literacy. These classes will serve the most high-needs families in our Children's Home Initiative program.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?
It has highlighted how much work there is to be done. I'm happy to announce that we are in the process of hiring a digital literacy program manager to continue the work I've started through this fellowship. I hope to lead them in expanding what we offer and being a more present organization in this work.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?
I've really enjoyed seeing what others are doing. I also really enjoyed the opportunity to talk in public as well.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?
I've started to work directly with the City of Austin technology manager to create better funding structures for our programs.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR
Project Read
Provo, UT
Pronouns: she/her

A forever student, Aleah finds joy and satisfaction in education in all its forms and feels lucky to see it changing lives every day. Although her formal training is in elementary education, Aleah has worked in adult education for seven years. When not directing the everyday at Project Read, Aleah can be found working on her latest project, piecing together a puzzle at the kitchen table, watching movies with her family, or taking long drives in the mountains.

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nten.org/dif

Tell us about the project you worked on as a Digital Inclusion Fellow.

Project Read provides one-on-one literacy tutoring, and for years we've toyed with adding digital literacy to our class offerings. I felt this fellowship was the chance to make it happen. People who don't have the skills to navigate the digital world lose out on so many opportunities, and the pandemic made the need for digital skills undeniable. My goal was to provide classes on basic digital skills, train volunteer tutors to use digital tools, and offer a walk-in help lab. I partnered with the Provo City Library and set a class schedule using the NorthStar Digital Literacy curriculum. In the past year, we provided 910 hours of digital literacy instruction to over 180 students and volunteers. Seventeen students earned digital literacy certificates for passing proctored tests. Through a partnership with United Way, 12 students also earned a computer by attending 10 hours of classes.

How has this project changed your organization's approach and capacity to do digital inclusion work?

It opened my eyes to the needs and developmental skills of our learners. We're now much more comfortable using technology in our literacy lessons to set students up for success in using technology during lessons and in daily life. Our digital literacy classes are our most popular ones, and have attracted many more students to our other programs as well.

How has this project influenced your work or contributed to your professional development?

I'd never stopped to think that others don't share my understanding of technology. I used to instruct people as though they knew what I was talking about, and this project showed me that's not always the case. I'm so familiar with formatting documents that it never occurred to me that people didn't know they could. During our first Microsoft Word lesson, I was taken aback when a student didn't know they could change fonts, colors, and more — it was great to see her play with all the combinations! I no longer assume that someone has an email account, let alone knows how to access it. I'm also much more aware of the ways I can make technology more accessible to all.

How has your work over the past year contributed to the digital inclusion sector locally and/or nationally?

I've worked locally to maintain a digital inclusion presence in Utah County by partnering with United Way in their digital inclusion efforts. I was also invited and attended meetings with the Utah Communities Connect alliance and shared what I was doing with my project.

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