

Digital Access for All Idahoans: Community Coalition Call

Thursday, May 18, 2023

11 a.m. MT / 10 a.m. PT on Zoom

Coalition Call Leaders/Facilitators:

- Deana Brown, Library Learning Consultant, Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL)
- Chelsea Summerlin, Digital Inclusion Consultant, ICfL

Coalition Call Presenters:

- Stephanie Bailey-White, State Librarian, ICfL
- Dylan Baker, Deputy State Librarian, ICfL
- Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, National Skill Coalition

Meeting Recorder: Shaela Priaulx-Soho Assistant, ICfL

Time	Item	Minutes	Who
11:00 a.m.	Introductions & Purpose of Call	5	Deana, Chelsea
11:05 a.m.	Closing the Digital Skill Divide	30	Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
11:35 a.m.	Q&A	5	Amanda
11:40 a.m.	Planning Updates	15	Dylan, Stephanie
11:55 a.m.	Q&A / Wrap Up	5	Deana
12:00 p.m.	Office Hours	30	Deana, Chelsea

Meeting Notes

Welcome, Introductions, and Purpose of Call:

Deana Brown welcomed and introduced the purpose of the quarterly community coalition call and outlined the agenda: The ICfL is the lead agency working to create the [Digital Access for All Idahoans Plan](#) (DAAI Plan). These calls allow the ICfL to share progress on that plan and for participants to engage in the process.

Closing the Digital Skill Divide

- Amanda Bergson-Shilcock presented: [Closing the Digital Skill Divide](#)
 - National Skills Coalition is a 20-year-old non-profit organization. National Skills Coalition fights for a national commitment to inclusive, high-quality skills training

so more people have access to a better life and more local businesses see sustained growth. They are giving people access to high-quality skills training and giving employers access to a skilled workforce. National Skills Coalition does not accept public funding, exclusively foundation and donation funded, just a policy advocacy organization.

- The digital divide is not just about high-speed internet and digital device access but also about skills. If you have more digital skills, you are more likely to take advantage of programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program. Higher skills are correlated with higher broadband adoption rates.
- People mainly enroll in digital skills classes to get a job or a better job.
 - The project researched 43 million online job ads in 2021, including hundreds of thousands from Idaho. They discovered about fifteen thousand different skills that showed up across the ads. The average ad sought eight skills. Skills were coded Definitely digital, Likely digital, and Not digital. Idaho employers (43%) require digital skills slightly below the national average (47%). Virtually all of today's jobs require digital skills, 92% nationally and 90% in Idaho.
- Every industry needs digital skills
 - This includes industries that are priorities for Idaho, such as manufacturing (93%); agriculture (86%); mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction (92%), and transportation and warehousing (77%).
 - Examples: Construction workers using mobile apps, collaborative robots (cobots), Telehealth, Agriculture – using in-cab tractor technology, irrigation, fertilization, gps, greenhouse and grain silo sensor technology, Augmented reality (looking through a phone or camera screen).
- The bottom line is that every kind of worker needs digital skills these days.
 - Jobs that require minimal work experience still need digital skills.
 - Jobs that require limited education nevertheless need digital skills.
 - Myth – younger workers are digital natives. Younger workers need to develop digital skills too. Workers of every age have fragmented knowledge, meaning they are comfortable with some digital skills and not comfortable with others. Workers of every age need opportunities to build from their skills to those they need.
 - Jobs that require digital skills pay more—23% salary increase on average.
 - Higher pay leads to greater economic vitality for Idaho.
- Small businesses have a strong demand for workers with digital skills.
 - Small businesses post 1-50 job ads per year, 90% requiring a likely digital skill and 44% requiring a definitely digital skill. Small businesses depend on partners in public libraries, the public workforce system, adult education system to help develop skilled talent.

- Large businesses post 501-1000 job ads annually, with 94% requiring a likely digital skill and 52% requiring a definitely digital skill. Large companies can train in-house or go to community colleges and request a training program.
- Workers need both foundational and industry-specific digital skills.
- Idaho data:
 - There is a strong demand for workers with digital skills. Idaho's most in-demand foundational skills are: typing, data entry, "computer literacy," word processing, Excel, PowerPoint, and customer relationship management software.
 - Select industry-specific skills with strong demand in Idaho: Finance and insurance, healthcare, manufacturing, and retail.
- What can Idaho do?
 - Idaho leaders can use these findings to ensure new federal investments pay off for workers in small businesses.
 - Borrow Amanda's charts and graphs to help decide where to invest. Use them in presentations and grant proposals.
 - Use digital equity and BEAD planning to lay a roadmap for digital upskilling.
 - Invest in the digital skill-building strategies that research tells us works well: Industry sector partnerships, contextualized and integrated learning, and rapid prototyping of new programs.
 - Ensure strong communications between the state labor agency and workforce stakeholders exist.
 - Make sure digital skill-building opportunities are embedded across industries- for example, construction and farm work, not just white-collar jobs.
 - Combine findings with Census data to target services and close gaps for covered populations.
- Contact Information
 Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
 Senior Fellow
 (215) 285-2860 mobile
amandabs@nationalskillscoalition.org

Q&A Session with Amanda

- Jaleen shared [telehealth resource training](#)
- Stephanie asked to share high-level findings on the covered population.
 - Amanda answered: The census bureau has good data to show you and is available to everyone. An example is given: Veterans or rural residents work in public industry. We need to consider the industry and where we invest our Digital Equity Act resources and ensure we are targeting our digital skills investments to those industries. Amanda is happy to chat offline if people would like to discuss Idaho's data.

- People with limited literacy or educational attainment working in entry-level jobs often don't invest a lot in their workers for training. Helping people build digital skills can help them move into higher-paying positions. How could we target digital equity resources to support them in moving up within their industry or to adjacent industries?
- Deana asked, are there 1 or 2 surprising findings from your research?
 - Amanda responded it was interesting how many industries need people not to have just foundational skills. Almost half the jobs require you to have industry-specific skills. It's less about memorizing a particular piece of software and more about ensuring you are helping students and learners develop a sense of self-efficacy.
- Trevi asked for industry-specific digital skills. Are those generally provided through employer partnerships for incumbent workers? Or are there examples where skills instruction happens pre-employment? If so, how are those specific digital skills programs accessing industry-specific software?
 - Amanda replied with the short answer. It's both. Sometimes they happen through customized training programs that support incumbent workers. In some cases, it's pre-employment training. People pay for this in many ways – federal workforce and innovation dollars, ARPA, adult education, public funds through libraries, HUD, and USDA. There are a lot of different ways. The needs in Boise are different than the needs in Moscow. Other parts of Idaho will have various sizes of employers and different capacities of employers to participate in these conversations and training programs. What you always want to have is a feedback loop. Thinking about where those relationships are already strong and where there are good feedback loops can help you figure out the most efficient way to get helpful information instead of reinventing the wheel.
- Deana loved the idea of feedback loops and community connections. Critical in going forward to make the plan successful.
 - Amanda added libraries are constantly protecting the individual rights of patrons. Still, librarians get a first look at the things people are struggling with that they are coming in for help about. Data collection through public libraries in a way that doesn't violate individual people's privacy but does give you a window to peek into what are the things that most people come to a librarian for help with. This can also signal where this interest is or a real gap and insufficient programs and services.
- Kevin shared the GI bill can also be utilized for apprenticeship programs.
- Deana mentioned a conversation about digital literacy vs. digital skills. Digital skills are finite and specific to software and industry. The idea of being digitally literate and understanding how these systems and software work so you can be more agile and adaptive as things change.

- Amanda said the field is in flux right now—some people like the term literacy, and some like digital fluency and resiliency. The important thing is to have a conversation about the concepts. What we are building toward is people feeling empowered to navigate the world and not just react to it.

Planning Updates

- Dylan Baker introduced himself and gave the following updates:
 - As of May 18, we are still in the data collection and gathering phase. Our contracted partners, Boise State University Idaho Policy Institute, have been doing an amazing amount of work collecting data from the field on what barriers and challenges exist throughout Idaho regarding digital access. They just concluded 18 regional focus groups in all corners of the state. Nearly 100 participants. Great information so far, thanks to those who participated in the focus groups. News soon on results, barriers identified, and outcomes and strategies. The focus groups provided great qualitative data, stories, anecdotes, and individual stories accessing digital tools and barriers.
 - The other part is a statewide survey conducted by phone in both English and Spanish. Final permissions to start fielding this week will occur now and over the next week. We are gathering over 1000 English and 400 Spanish or bilingual responses from the state to represent those covered populations and ask them about broadband access, affordability, devices, digital skills, and tech support. This will give us a good baseline of where we are in Idaho and where we need to focus our efforts in the Digital Access for All Idahoans plan. The final plan is due mid-November, aiming to have it done before then. This summer will be a 30-day public comment period for feedback on what is in the draft for the final product coming out later in the fall.
- Stephanie Bailey-White followed up with these updates:
 - A steering committee meeting will take place at the end of this month, taking a deeper dive into the preliminary findings from Boise State and the vision statement.
 - We are working on a public [engagement opportunity in Moscow](#) on June 28.
 - Stephanie addressed when the implementation funding is flowing into the state and when we can start taking advantage of that. Early 2024 - the state will have implementation funds that we are planning on doing some statewide programs and then opening up to competitive grants. There will also be competitive funding on the federal level. Funding opens soon for people interested in taking a more significant role in promoting the Affordable Connectivity Program.
 - Chelsea shared a link to the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#)

Q&A Wrap Up

Deana opened the meeting for questions.

- Coach Newton asked if the digital skills and literacy plan for all Idahoans focused more on adults, all Idahoans, or if there was a section focused on youth literacy programs. In some of his programs this summer, he sees parents sitting with youth and participating—an unexpected opportunity to put something in front of the parents to follow up.
 - Stephanie replied: Each state gets to do these plans. Each plan must focus on eight covered populations ranging from rural communities to incarcerated, aging populations, and people with limited English skills. Youth are not called out specifically, but 76% - 78% of Idahoans fall into at least one of those eight covered populations. We have been working with our partners at the State Department of Ed, the State Board of Ed, and local school districts because we know the more youth and students with digital skills, the better off we will be as a state. There will be ample opportunities for us to help address that with a more intentional approach, including opportunities for out-of-school learning, coding classes, and STEM education. I would love to hear about more ideas others have.
- Michelle asked Amanda: On the National Skills Coalition website, under issues, there is a section on higher education, and it looks like some pieces of how higher ed might not be addressing these issues effectively, and there may be some gaps. Are you able to speak to that?
 - Amanda replied: The first is a federal policy issue. Congress limits federal financial aid to classes that are 600 clock hours and sixteen weeks long. Some higher-quality short-term programs would be great if we could open federal financial assistance.
 - At the state level, many states have worked on post-secondary credential attainment. How do we help more state residents get 2–4 year degrees or other credentials? Essential to help people earn a credential that has meaning in the job market.
 - Sometimes people have trouble completing workforce or education programs because of issues like childcare, transportation, and other supportive services that can hinder achieving the desired education. Making sure there are good public policies to support that is important.
- Stephanie asked for CWI's perspective or insight on the people they are working with or a report on what they are hearing.
 - Trevi answered: CWI has been crafting digital skills pathways for the last few years. A broad overview, they have two distinct pathways: 1. An on-ramp Apple partnership. Apple's pathway involves digital creativity, entrepreneurship, home-based businesses, marketing using social media tools, and coding certificates. 2. Uses digital applied skills. They have broken down discrete skills typing, keyboarding, safe web search, and how to use the internet for job search. We have learned that there is a varying need for the depth of digital skills services. Teaching ESL programs using iPad to teach digital learning skills assists foreign-born professionals moving into their computer sciences programs. There is a

massive breadth of experience and need. So many levels of skills need to be addressed. Supportive services and digital skills are one piece, and access is also tremendous. The navigational piece is where we need digital navigators and folks who can sit one-on-one.

- Deana shared the [University of Idaho's Certified Remote Work Professional course](#).
- Amanda shared information on a new grant, Connecting Minority Communities.
- Erin asked: How many of these programs are accessible for the visually and/or hearing impaired? Have those needs or those of those with developmental delay/learning disabilities been addressed as well?
 - Amanda answered. There is a small hand full of disability organizations building out digital inclusion expertise and a small handful of digital inclusion organizations building out their disability expertise. State offices and Vocational Rehabilitation are a real prospect for more to be happening. Some folks with disabilities have been at the cutting edge of using and adopting new technology. Be mindful and intentional about access for people with disabilities who are covered in the eight populations in the Digital Equity Act but also don't assume because they have a disability that, they're behind on technology.
- Deana asked if anyone is developing trainings for their community that focus on accessibility needs. Any additional items you are considering?
 - Trevi commented we need to do better and focus exclusively on that. It's a multi-level challenge.
 - Amanda shared an example from [Minnesota](#)
 - Deana commented it is great to keep those populations' needs and voices heard as we move forward.
- Dylan asked: How do Idaho and the Mountain West differ in needs from the rest of the country?
 - Amanda replied: Take the things you already know about your state and layer the digital skills piece on top. Industries and geographic accessibility are part of the puzzle piece. For example, most people drive to work vs. public transportation or telework. Are folks able to access jobs? What you know about your state that could and will affect your digital skills. Mountain West data saw more of a split between big employers (who have resources for in-house training) and every other employer. The split is more pronounced vs. other states. Big employers have access to resources, and small employers use public libraries and workforce boards. We want people to know that digital skills are essential for more people than just white-collar workers.
 - Tina shared the Learn Idaho [In-Person Technology class](#)
 - Chelsea shared an article on [The Myth of the Digital Native](#)
 - Deana shared an activity for [Digital Inclusion](#)

- Chelsea shared [Idaho Digital Skills](#) training

**Deana ended the meeting at 12:08 and offered to stay on to answer questions.
57 on the call**

Office Hours

- Susan asked about access to internet service. Are there strides in getting better service? Century Link says it's a copper wire, and that's as good as it will get.
 - Dylan – there is a Broadband pot of funds to help.
 - Dylan shared [Link Up Idaho!](#) It relates to infrastructure quality and affordable broadband to your door.
- Derek commented Ada Community Library would be partnering with Tina's program, [learnidaho.org](#), to teach seniors digital skills.
- Tina wants to know if there are connections she can make for ways to expand to more locations. What is happening in your world for older adults?
 - Deana answered: libraries offer one-on-one tech help and drop-in models for folks of any age. We are seeing a lot of adults coming in and making appointments. One-on-one is more effective.
 - Chelsea shared about a possible digital navigators statewide helpline—capacity grants for libraries to offer direct one-on-one help.
- Derek mentioned that he sees a tech coach, coding classes, and 3d printing available. The [Connecting Communities grant highlighted](#) so many opportunities. Training is crucial for staff, and consistent knowledge to provide the same level of support.
 - Stephanie shared we will be having another round of Connecting Communities. Stay tuned.
- Kevin explained Lifetime Arts is an organization focusing on creative aging (over 55). There are grants for Western states. Kevin shared a plan to create a Western state council and long-term collaboration. There will be funding for five projects, \$2500 each, in Idaho. He wants to reach out and connect with someone who can represent. Deana offered to be involved.
 - Deana shared [Lifetime arts](#)

Office hours ended at 12:26

Next Digital Access for All Idahoans: Community Coalition Call: Thursday, August 17 at 11 a.m. MT / 10 a.m. PT. Meeting information is available at <https://libraries.idaho.gov/event/digital-access-for-all-idahoans-community-coalition-call-2/>