

Starting Your Own Digital Navigator Program

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Introduction to Digital Navigator Programs

What is Digital Inclusion?

Terms such as the digital divide and the homework gap are often used to describe the disparity separating those with access to the internet and devices from those without. However, these terms do not always capture the complexities of our digital age. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) defines digital inclusion as "the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This includes five elements:

- 1. Affordable, robust broadband internet service
- 2. Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user
- 3. Access to digital literacy (skills) training
- 4. Quality technical support
- 5. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage selfsufficiency, participation, and collaboration"

What is Digital Equity?

By addressing the five elements of digital inclusion, we work toward achieving digital equity, which <u>NDIA defines</u> as a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation



in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and social participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

What are Digital Skills?

Training related to digital literacy or skills is fundamental as one of the five elements of digital inclusion. The <u>American Library Association's (ALA) Digital Literacy Task Force</u> defines digital literacy as the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

What is a Digital Navigator?

Digital Navigators facilitate the digital inclusion process – home connectivity, devices, and digital skills – through ongoing interactions with community members. Like reference librarians, they approach their role with empathy. They assess needs, recommend resources, and provide sustained support throughout the learner's journey. What sets digital navigators apart is their ability to offer comprehensive assistance beyond a single interaction, ensuring continued support tailored to individual needs.

Communities need personalized, ongoing, and holistic digital inclusion assistance, which the digital navigator model provides. These programs are characterized by their flexibility and adaptability. They are capable of addressing urgent needs, offering long-term support, and catering to specialized settings such as telehealth or higher education. Digital navigators consistently provide holistic and Page | 4



individualized support, addressing the interconnected elements of digital inclusion while tailoring assistance to meet unique needs through multiple interactions. This support extends beyond traditional tech assistance, fostering tech adoption by helping communities recognize the benefits of technology – from crafting resumes to using Bluetooth speakers.

Why are They Important?

Digital navigators who belong to the communities they serve have an inherent understanding of the challenges, cultural nuances, and socio-economic factors affecting their peers. Community members are more inclined to seek assistance when they can connect with someone familiar, creating a local approach that overcomes access barriers and encourages trust.

Community-based digital navigators serve as advocates and champions for digital inclusion initiatives, leveraging their insider perspective to advocate for resources, policies, and programs tailored to their community's needs. By amplifying community voices and advocating for equitable technology access and skills, these navigators contribute to bridging the digital divide and advancing social equity on a broader scale.

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Setting Up Your Program

What is the Need in Your Community?

Gather Data on Computer and Internet Use in Your Area

Complete the following chart for your community. Use the U.S. Census

Narrative Profiles tool: https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/narrative-profiles.

Scroll to the bottom of the page for the heading "Computer and Internet Use."

Repeat this process for County, Place, Census Tract, ZIP Code, and American Indian

Area Homeland.

Idaho

Households with a computer	94.2%	
Desktop or laptop	82.2%	
A smartphone	87.0%	
A tablet or portable wireless computer	64.9%	
Other	2.3%	
Households with a broadband internet	88.0%	
subscription		
Cellular data plan	79.4%	
Broadband such as cable, fiber optic, or	68.9%	
DSL		
Satellite	11.2%	
Dial-up alone	0.4%	
Other service alone	0.1%	





Gather Data on Internet Service Providers in Your Area

88% of consumers in Idaho have access to a wired connection with broadband speeds faster than 25 Mbps. To find out how your area compares, go to Broadband Now (https://broadbandnow.com) and enter your ZIP code. Then complete the following:

Number of ISPs	Fastest Speed	Average Download Speed	Lowest Price (indicate speed)	Highest Price (indicate speed)

What is the Purpose of Your Program?

Community Needs

When considering community needs, identify specific gaps in digital access and your target demographic, such as seniors or low-income families. Engage the community. Ask members of your community to be active participants in shaping your program. You can collect data through surveys and interviews.



Organizational Priorities and Capacity

Review your organization's mission statement, identify overarching goals, and align the digital navigator program to that mission. Remember your capacity, both in the short and long term. Think about human resources, technological infrastructure, financial support, and training and development needs.

Example Program

Think of a tech support hotline supporting veterans in digital learning provided by a veteran's service organization. In this example, the organization, through its established relationship with the veteran community, noticed an unmet need in veteran's digital skills and access to tech support. The organization's mission is to meet veterans where they are and empower growth. The organization already had some infrastructure in place and expanded its mission to meet the needs of its community.

wnat's Yo	our Program's	s Purpose?			



Asset Mapping

Overview

Asset mapping goes beyond a list of organizations and programs; its outcomes are often inventories or maps. Rather than dwelling on deficits, asset mapping highlights solutions, viewing challenges as opportunities to assess existing resources and community goals. This community-driven approach prioritizes the voices of those who benefit from the services. Instead of focusing on demographic data or poverty information, it involves reaching out to communities to identify goals and solutions.

Asset mapping leads to community investment in your organization and solutions, leveraging existing, successful resources. It can help your organization find and build lasting community partner relationships and broaden your understanding of digital access in your local context.

Best Practices

If your organization has other community engagement strategies, use those to inform your asset mapping process. This could include survey data, strategic plans, and feedback from partner organizations. Remember, this process is iterative. The resources you create should be updated as you find new partners, solutions, and resources.

Questions to Consider:

- What partners do you already have?
- Are there refurbishers or digital skills providers in your area?



- What are the services available to folks with disabilities?
- Are there upskilling or workforce development programs?
- Are there English as a Second Language (ESL) or adult education programs?
- Are low-cost internet plans available?

Starting List of Assets:



Target Audience

Digital navigators can't serve everyone, so it's important to narrow down your target audience.

Demographic Profile

Determine the characteristics of your target audience. Think about communities that already trust your organization. <u>The Digital Equity Act</u> defines eight covered populations:

- Low-incomes households
- Aging individuals
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans
- Individuals with a disability
- Individuals with a language barrier, either English learners or individuals with low literacy
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

Who are your current learners? Are there communities your organization would like to serve?

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Skill Levels
Are your learners comfortable with technology? Are they interested in learning more
digital skills? Do they have specific questions about digital skills?
Assessing Tech Skills
Do you feel confident in evaluating your community's technology skills? Are you
familiar with the indicators of digital skills competencies (see the skills assessment
form for examples)?

Audience Interests
Are you aware of what your target audience wishes to learn? What technologies has
your community explored? Are there non-technology-related interests?
Identifying Challenges
What problems are individuals attempting to solve? Technology is a tool to address
real issues. You can develop a program, event, or activity about a real-world problem
and how digital skills can solve it. Job skills, connecting with friends and family, or
completing a degree are all examples of problems technology can solve.

Desired Skills vs. Current Needs

What digital skills do you believe your target audience should know? What do your
learners care about now? What problems do your learners want to solve that could be
tackled with tech? Note that these answers may evolve as your program grows.
Eligibility
Does your organization have any eligibility criteria for learners? Are there
requirements to participate in your program?

Adapted from the <u>Nebraska Library Commission's Target Audience Guide</u>.

Digital Navigators

Who are Digital Navigators?

An excellent digital navigator:

- Is comfortable with technology.
- Has the ability and desire to learn and teach.
- Can understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.
- Is patient, compassionate, and supportive, creating a trusting relationship with learners.
- Is a creative problem solver who negotiates and handles stressful situations in a positive manner using good humor.
- Is service-oriented, conducting themselves in an approachable and professional manner.
- Is a member of the community they serve.

What are the Responsibilities of a Digital Navigator?

Digital navigators should:

- Identify and assess needs.
- Build relationships and trust.
- Use the right methods and tools to provide accurate and complete information regarding access, devices, and connectivity.



- Offer foundational skills or make referrals to education programs.
- Keep records of interactions, process records, and file documents.
- Follow up to ensure goals have been met.
- Enter data (as needed).

Adapted from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

What is the Digital Navigator Process?

Digital navigators have a process. The process can be thought of as a cycle – repeating as necessary to fully meet learners' needs.

Initial learner intake.

During this first stage, navigators collect contact information and details about the learner's goals. They'll begin collecting all the relevant information to serve the learner going forward.

- When and how might this take place?
 - Completed online by a community member when requesting an appointment.
 - o Completed as a referral by a partner organization.
 - o Completed by a digital navigator in conversation with a new learner.

Forms

- o Appointment form.
- Referral Form: Some programs modify intake forms to collect different information when a referral is received.



Assess goals and needs.

Starting from the initial learner intake, navigators learn about existing skills, connectivity, and device access and identify what is needed to address the learner's goals. In this step, they're expanding on the information from the intake form and confirming that they understand how best to help the learner.

- When and how might this take place?
 - During initial conversations with a community member, the digital navigator will use informal and formal assessment tools as needed.
 - During subsequent meetings, the digital navigator will discuss the learner's satisfaction with previous solutions and may use formal and informal assessments to measure the learner's progress.
 - During subsequent meetings, the digital navigator will discuss if learner goals have evolved.
- Form: <u>Session Summary.</u>
- Resources:
 - o Skills assessment form.
 - Northstar digital literacy assessment.

Evaluate and discuss solutions.

Once they've completed the assessment, navigators review available resources and focus on the learner's preferences and priorities. This includes researching relevant resources and talking through each suggested solution with the learner.

• When and how might this take place?



 Once the digital navigator understands the learner's goals and existing skills, connectivity, and device access, they discuss options for gaining skills, connectivity, and device access. The digital navigator will be responsive to the learner's preferences.

 In subsequent meetings, the digital navigator and learner will discuss what worked and did not work with previously selected solutions and discuss alternative solutions as needed.

Form: <u>Session Summary.</u>

Refer to relevant resources.

After they've decided on a solution, navigators provide resources and a plan to help the learner reach goals. This may involve referrals and direct service.

• When and how might this take place?

Once the digital navigator and learner agree on a plan, the navigator will
refer the learner to resources relevant to their goals and needs. The
resources might be accessed and used during or outside the meeting.
 The digital navigator may suggest direct support, such as individual
digital skills coaching.

• Form: <u>Session Summary</u>.

Resources:

o Idaho Digital Skills.

o Resources for finding an ISP and Lifeline information.



Check in and evaluate progress.

After the referral, navigators determine whether goals have been met or if

additional meetings are required. This process should continue throughout the

appointment. Navigators should check in and confirm that all solutions are working

for the learners' needs.

When and where might this take place?

o The digital navigator will check in with the learner at subsequent

scheduled meetings or through other contact methods to determine if

the learner has achieved their goals or would like more support. If more

support is needed, return to step two. If not, continue to step six.

• Form: Session Summary.

Learner exit.

After the evaluation, navigators begin to wrap up relationships and collect

program feedback, data on the status of goals and the learner's satisfaction, and

impact stories.

• When and where might this take place?

o When the digital navigator and the learner decide they do not need to

meet again in the short term, the survey might be provided on paper, by

email, or via a call from the digital navigator's supervisor.

• Form: Follow-up survey

Adapted from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

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CfL Idaho Commission for Libraries Job Description

Title: Digital Navigator

Reports to: The Digital Navigator will report to [supervisor's title].

Job Overview: The Digital Navigator supports [community or target population] who

need home internet, devices, tech support, or digital skills training. Navigators may

help learners [in location, e.g., in-person or via phone, email, text, or video chat].

The Digital Navigator enables the [agency's name] efforts to provide digital access to

[community or target population]. This position is [full-time, part-time, embedded, or

volunteer].

Responsibilities and Duties:

Contact learners seeking help or those identified by community partner

organizations.

Assess learner's access to technology, test their digital skills, and identify

connectivity needs. Co-design a learning plan by matching services and

referrals.

Coach learners on using the internet to meet their needs. As needed, provide

referrals to additional digital skills training sources.

Help learners find affordable computers, internet-enabled devices, or

resources for repair help.

Find, create, and promote content for digital skills, public Wi-Fi, and community

resources.

- Engage in team meetings and provide feedback on developing the Digital Navigator services.
- [Non-English language speaking, e.g., Spanish-speaking] Navigators may support the translation of website resources.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Critical Skills and Aptitudes:

- Enjoy learning and teaching digital skills, focusing on the internet, devices, and software.
- Have excellent self-organization, language capacity, and cultural competency.
- Show excellent communication skills, establishing trust with all types of learners.
- Have a good attitude, interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity, and a sense of humor.
- Have the skills for creative problem-solving, negotiating, and handling stressful situations.
- Provide excellent learner service, establish boundaries with learners, and show innovation and flexibility.

Adapted from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

Digital Navigator Training

Training digital navigators involves equipping them with a diverse skill set. Here's an overview of training recommendations:

• Foundations of digital navigation:

- o Understanding digital equity, inclusion, and the digital divide.
- Communication and community engagement skills, including active listening, empathy, and cultural competency.
- Fundamentals of adult learning, including self-directed learning,
 experiential learning, and motivation theory.

• Navigator skills and strategies:

- Strategies for providing basic procedural training and support.
- o Technology troubleshooting and support techniques.
- Cybersecurity training.
- Information about assistive technology tools.

• High-quality referrals and access to support:

- o Referrals to digital skills training.
- Support in identifying and accessing appropriate devices.
- o Support in finding and applying for affordable broadband.

• Monitoring and evaluation:

- o Conducting a needs assessment/reference interview.
- Tracking learner progress.



Measuring impact.

• Putting it all together: The appointment/process:

- Assess needs and set goals.
- o Evaluate and deliver solutions.
- o Refer to relevant resources.
- o Check-in and evaluate progress.

Implementation Plan

Digital Skills Curriculum

Below are online self-guided and teacher-focused digital skills training curricula and lesson plans.

Idaho Digital Skills

idahodigitalskills.org

Idaho Digital Skills offers Idahoans free online learning tools to increase their digital skills. Various tools and resources are available, from lessons for using a mouse to help applying for jobs online. Lessons are available in English and Spanish.

Niche Academy

my.nicheacademy.com/idaho

Niche Academy is an online learning platform built for libraries. It contains interactive tutorials on various topics.

Google for Education, Applied Digital Skills

applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/s/en/home

Google for Education has creative, video-based lessons to prepare students for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Courses are offered in English.

NorthStar Digital Literacy Assessment

https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/locations/university-of-idaho-extension-digital-economy-program

Northstar Services include assessments, assessment certificates, computer classes, and Northstar Online Learning accounts for learning and practice. Northstar



is provided by the University of Idaho Extension's Digital Economy Program.

Assessment and curricula are offered in English and Spanish.

University of Idaho Extension's Digital Economy Program

uidaho.edu/extension/digital-economy

The program provides learning opportunities focused on basic digital skills, retraining for remote work, and helping Idaho entrepreneurs and business owners access new markets and expand their sales using online venues.

Infrastructure

What resources do you need to provide digital navigator services?

Needs	Who provides?	Cost
Telephone/cell phone lines (dedicated numbers,		
hotlines, stipends for volunteer use of personal		
lines)		
Email		
Internet (mobile hotspots, fixed)		
Devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones)		
Transportation (organizational vehicle, insurance		
costs, reimbursement structure for use of		
personal vehicle)		

Adapted from the Digital Navigator Playbook.



Marketing

How will you advertise your services to your community? Accessibility is key here. All content should be accessible and follow applicable federal laws. And don't forget language accessibility. What languages does your community speak? Where are the folks you hope to serve currently getting their information?

For more information on web accessibility, refer to https://webaim.org/intro.

Methods	Who provides?	Cost
Social media		
Newsletter		
Website		
Local newspaper		
Radio		
Direct mail		
Branded items (pencils, bookmarks, etc.)		
Translation services		
Accessibility services		

Adapted from the <u>Digital Navigator Playbook</u>.

Recruitment and Onboarding

Digital navigator programs can leverage a combination of existing staff, interns, or hiring to fulfill various roles.

Existing Staff

Existing staff members within an organization can undergo cross-training to become digital navigators, expanding the program's reach and capacity. This approach uses existing resources and expertise while enhancing the organization's support of the community's digital inclusion efforts.

Cohort of Interns or Part-time Staff

Digital navigator programs can recruit interns or part-time staff to work within existing organizations, embedding them in community settings where they can directly support community members. This approach allows for close collaboration between the digital navigator program and partner organizations, leveraging existing infrastructure and resources to extend the program's reach.

Full-time Staff

Digital navigator programs may employ full-time staff members to serve within existing organizations as dedicated navigators. By embedding full-time navigators within organizations, the program can establish a consistent presence in the community and develop long-term relationships with community members and partner organizations.





Tech Waiver

There are potential liability concerns when helping learners with their personal devices. A tech waiver is a simple way of getting agreement between the navigator and the learner. The device owner must acknowledge, prior to receiving help, that the digital navigator is not at fault if there is any negative impact caused by their help. The Denver Public Library's tech waiver is a good example (https://www.denverlibrary.org/techwaiver). If your organization already has policies in place, make sure your digital navigators are trained to follow proper procedures.



Measurement and Evaluation

Measurement and evaluation are important to determine the program's impact. You'll want to rely on both quantitative and qualitative methods. These metrics serve as tools to assess the program's reach, effectiveness, and the extent to which it meets the community's needs.

Quantitative Metrics

Quantitative metrics provide a numerical basis for assessing the scale and scope of the program's activities. Key quantitative indicators include:

- Tracking the number of learners engaged in the program, i.e., the number of learners who successfully completed a computer course.
- Measuring the effectiveness of outreach efforts, i.e., an increase in web traffic after a marketing email.
- Assessing the overall use of program resources, i.e., measuring how many people used the dedicated chat service.

Monitoring learner numbers over time can reveal program engagement trends, helping identify successful outreach strategies and areas for improvement. The quantity of learners also serves as a direct measure of the program's reach within the community.

Additionally, quantitative metrics can extend to the use of digital tools and resources provided by the program. Tracking metrics such as website visits,



downloads of educational materials, and the use of online support platforms offers insights into the community's engagement with digital resources. These metrics can help with budgeting and reporting.

Qualitative Metrics

While quantitative metrics provide valuable numerical data, qualitative metrics offer a deeper understanding of the program's impact on individuals and the community. These metrics focus on the quality of outcomes and learners' experiences. Qualitative metrics include:

- Improving digital skills among learners
- Overall community satisfaction
- The effectiveness of support services

Assessing improved digital skills involves capturing qualitative feedback from learners about their abilities to navigate digital tools, access online resources, and address digital challenges independently. Community satisfaction can be measured through surveys, focus groups, or interviews, allowing learners to share their experiences and provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness.

Data Collection

Data collection will depend on the organizational structure and size of the program. When implementing any data collection methods, you must prioritize learner privacy and data security. Set clear protocols of what's tracked and how.



Forms

Forms are great for collecting specific data points from learners. Digital navigators can use forms to collect basic demographic information, feedback on program services, and details about learners' digital goals. Forms allow quick data entry and analysis, making them ideal for gathering focused information from many learners.

Spreadsheets

You can input data from various sources – including forms, surveys, or learner interactions – into a spreadsheet to track learner progress and analyze trends over time. Spreadsheets also allow for extensive data visualization. Digital navigators can use spreadsheets to track metrics such as the number of learners, types of assistance provided, and frequency of engagement.

Project Management Software

Project management software is a comprehensive data collection, organization, and collaboration solution. It can enable digital navigators to create tasks, track progress, and manage learner interactions in a centralized system. These tools include project boards that can be customized to represent different aspects of the program, such as learner onboarding, ongoing support, and training initiatives.





Summarizing

Digital navigators are a community-based solution that can help close the digital divide. The Idaho Commission for Libraries is committed to expanding <u>Digital</u> <u>Access for All Idahoans</u>, and that means creating an ecosystem of statewide, regional, and local solutions. Digital navigators play an essential role in this work. In-person, on-the-ground, and in-community support ensures Idahoans have what they need to thrive online.

The elements of this workbook should help organizations develop a plan for starting programs. Understanding digital navigators and why they're important is a first step. From there, it's crucial to gather data and define the scope of your program. After that, focus on the who, the what, and the how of digital navigation work. Then, establish practical resources for implementing your plan. Integrate data collection and measurement from the beginning. Examples of forms are in the following section.

Example Forms

Appointment Form

- 1. Enter your name.
- 2. What device are you using or having trouble with?
- 3. What would you like to talk to us about?
 - A. Internet offers
 - B. Low-cost devices
 - C. Research
 - D. Tech tutoring
 - E. Troubleshooting
 - F. Other
- 4. Please briefly describe the issue or question on your mind.
- 5. What's the best way to contact you?

Adapted from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance

Session Summary

- 1. Navigator(s)
- 2. Date
- 3. Day
- 4. Time
- 5. Session Type
 - A. Call
 - B. Call and email
 - C. Call and text
 - D. Contact and screen share
 - E. Email
 - F. In-person
 - G. Text
- 6. Duration
 - A. 0-5 minutes
 - B. 6-15 minutes
 - C. 16-30 minutes
 - D. More than 30 minutes
- 7. Learner's name
- 8. Learner's contact information
- 9. ZIP code [or other relevant location data or demographic data]
- 10. Learner's device
 - A. Laptop/desktop
 - B. No device
 - C. Smartphone
 - D. Tablet
 - E. Unknown
- 11. Type of help



- A. About us
- B. Internet offers
- C. Library e-content
- D. Low-cost devices
- E. Research
- F. Tech tutoring
- G. Troubleshooting
- 12. What questions were asked?
- 13. Learner feedback or testimonials

Adapted from the <u>National Digital Inclusion Alliance</u>.



Skills Assessment

- 1. Name
- 2. Contact information (phone/email)
- 3. What types of devices do you own/use? Check all that apply.
 - A. Computer
 - B. Smartphone
 - C. Tablet
 - D. Other:
- 4. How often do you use your devices? Please check the most appropriate option.
 - A. Several times a day
 - B. Once a day
 - C. A couple of times a week
 - D. Can't remember
 - E. Other:
- 5. How have you used each type of device in the past week? Check all that apply.
 - A. Apps
 - B. Emails
 - C. Messaging apps
 - D. Texting
 - E. Voice calls
 - F. Web browsing
 - G. Other:
- 6. Where do you go to use the internet? Check all that apply.
 - A. Computer at home
 - B. Computer at school or learning center
 - C. Computer at work
 - D. Computer at the library
 - E. Cell phone/tablet with Wi-Fi at work/library

- F. Cell phone/tablet with Wi-Fi using your cell plan
- G. Other:
- 7. How confident do you feel completing the following tasks? Put a check in the appropriate box.

Task	Very	Somewhat	Not very	Not at all	Not sure
Iask	confident	confident	confident	confident	NOT SUITE
Turning a computer					
on and logging on					
Using a mouse and					
keyboard					
Navigating around					
a website					
Using Google or					
other search					
engines					
Using email					
Shopping and					
paying bills online					
Using social media					
Taking an online					
course or training					
Searching and					
applying for jobs					
online					
Finding health					
information online					

Task	Very	Somewhat	Not very	Not at all	Not sure
	confident	confident	confident	confident	
Protecting your					
personal					
information online					

8. What is your digital skills goal(s)?

Adapted from the <u>National Digital Inclusion Alliance</u>.



Follow-Up Survey

- 1. Name
- 2. Which digital navigator(s) did you work with?
- 3. Please indicate how much progress you made toward each goal you set out to achieve:
 - A. Totally accomplished
 - B. Made a lot of progress
 - C. Made a little progress
 - D. Made no progress
- 4. Do you have any new digital skills goals you want to work toward?
- 5. How confident are you in finding resources for future training and technology needs on your own?
- 6. During your interactions with the Digital Navigator Program, were services delivered in a way that met your needs and made you feel comfortable and respected? If not, what could have been done differently?
- 7. May we contact you to follow up on your experience with this program? If yes, please include the best way to contact you.
- 8. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Adapted from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.