

Digital Equity is 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 cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

National Digital Equity Center

Accessible, reliable, and affordable broadband service continues to be out of reach for millions of Americans and thousands of Mainers, many of whom live in low-income, rural households. This gap in adoption of high-speed internet and the lack of skills needed to use broadband-enabled tools in meaningful ways continue to be a lag on the Maine economy.

While much of the attention tends to focus on connecting homes to the internet, another serious concern is emerging... how to leverage the internet beyond the typical uses of email and streaming television content. Increasingly, homes that have internet may not be leveraging the full power of that connection and even more concerning, those that are just getting an internet connection, or the 1000s of homes that are still waiting for a connection, may not fully understand the capability and value of an internet connection.

The National Digital Equity Center (NDEC) is committed is to closing the Digital Divide in Maine and across the United States. In addition to advocating for Affordable Broadband, Affordable Equipment and Public Computer Access, NDEC is focused on creating digitally literate citizens across Maine and beyond, providing communities with the expertise to mobilize broadband technologies through digital inclusion and literacy efforts.

Four major areas of support are especially important in Maine:

- ✓ Aging in Place
- ✓ Tourism
- ✓ Small and Home Business Growth & Support
- ✓ Residential Resources

Aging in Place

With one of the oldest populations in the United States and the rural nature of our population, on-line tools that help the aging population remain in their home is essential to quality of life. However, in order to assist this population, emerging technologies, coupled with recognition among our Maine hospitals and national policy makers, makes this a strategic imperative in Maine.

- Remote wellness checks
- Vital sign monitoring
- Video Conferencing with your doctor or rural health clinic
- On-line tools that help you manage appointments and your records

This type of program is designed to introduce citizens to the ever-changing world of medical care... right from their home.

Tourism

Tourism continues to be one of Maine's lead industries, yet many of tourism related industries are, not utilizing many of the modern technology conveniences that potential tourists use. Many in this sector of the economy have recognized the need for a more robust on-line presence, but we find the state's tourism industry, primarily made up of small businesses, lagging in convenient on-line tools that can increase the economic activity across this vital sector of the Maine economy.

- Website development and enhancement

- Social media training
- Developing apps for tourism related tours or visits

Tourism is big business for small business in Maine, and exposing them to on-line tools to help this sector of the economy grow is an important focus of NDEC.

Small and Home-based Business Growth and Support

Maine has approximately 50,947 businesses, representing approximately 508,002 employees.

<http://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/qcew1.html>

- Industry Specific instruction
- Specific training for employees in on line tools such as QuickBooks, Social Media, Excel or other online tools to increase business opportunities
- Website and Domain Email instruction

With 42.7% population of residents over 50 years of age, it is important to focus on business growth, development and sustainability.

Residential Resources

All of us are struggling to keep pace with online tools and technologies that can make our lives better. Being confident about the on-line content we consume, understand on line tools to make our lives easier, or helping to understand what television content might help you save money are all important to becoming a digitally connected citizens.

- Cord Cutting- do you really need all of those channels?
- Smart Home- tools for a 21st Century home
- Distant learning- at your pace and in your time
- Digital Literacy- improved computer skills and navigation
- Understanding the on-line content you consume

What we have found is that all of us, regardless of our educational background, pay scale, demographics or economic background, are struggling to keep pace with the rate of change in technology.

Classes/Workshops (for businesses, employees and residents)

In rural communities, time, distance, travel is a barrier to educational attainment; holding classes that are in accessible locations that are familiar and welcoming will increase participation. Geographic coverage throughout the designated service area ensures strong, widespread participation and good, measurable impacts.

Beyond the four focus areas listed above, NDEC offers a host of classroom instruction, or may work or refer to local programs and organizations across Maine that include:

- Introduction to Computer
- Windows 7, 8, 10
- Internet Safety
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft Outlook
- Microsoft Publisher
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- QuickBooks
- PhotoShop

- Social Media including FaceBook for Business & Individuals, Twitter, etc.
- WordPress
- Video Streaming
- iPad
- Gmail, Google Docs, etc.
- Targeted Classes:
 - Aging in Place
 - Tourism
 - Business Growth and Support
 - Websites, Social Media and Domain Email
 - Cutting the Cord
 - How to have a Smart House
 - Accessing Distance Learning Education

National Digital Inclusion Alliance Definitions:

<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/>

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Digital Inclusion

Digital Inclusion refers to 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 5 elements: 1) affordable, robust broadband internet service; 2) internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user; 3) access to digital literacy training; 4) quality technical support; and 5) applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration. Digital Inclusion must evolve as technology advances. Digital Inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to access and use technology.

Digital Literacy

NDIA recommends the American Library Association's definition of Digital Literacy via the [Digital Literacy Taskforce](#):

Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

A Digitally Literate Person:

- Possesses the variety of skills – technical and cognitive – required to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information in a wide variety of formats;
- Is able to use diverse technologies appropriately and effectively to retrieve information, interpret results, and judge the quality of that information;
- Understands the relationship between technology, life-long learning, personal privacy, and stewardship of information;
- Uses these skills and the appropriate technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, colleagues, family, and on occasion, the general public; and
- Uses these skills to actively participate in civic society and contribute to a vibrant, informed, and engaged community.