



# CENTERING DIGITAL EQUITY IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Digital Navigator program, launched in February 2023, aims to improve digital equity in King County by amplifying community access to affordable internet and devices, along with digital skills training. The program was independently evaluated by Applied Inference to assess community need and program impact. Read on for the report and its findings.



About Applied Inference, LLC

Led by Elizabeth Moore, PhD, Applied Inference specializes in research support and program evaluation with over 35 years of experience, spanning roles at the University of Washington, the nonprofit sector, and at Applied Inference since 1987. Moore combines experimental design, quantitative and qualitative methods, and an integrative approach to data analysis to identify underlying patterns that may help improve services to clients or identify unmet need. With a commitment to excellence, Applied Inference turns data into strategic assets for enhancing service delivery and achieving goals.



About the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) aspires to lead transformative change that will evolve our region's workforce development efforts into an innovative industry, community, and outcome-driven system with racial equity at its core. As a nonprofit organization, the WDC collaborates with a diverse set of partners to elevate job quality, economic growth, and prosperity for adults and youth throughout the Seattle-King County region.

# BRIDGING DIGITAL GAPS IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

## THE CHALLENGE

When the pandemic laid bare the stark digital divide, it was clear that digital access was no longer a luxury, it was a lifeline. With 92% of modern jobs demanding digital proficiency, the digital chasm threatened to deepen societal disparities. Particularly hard-hit were people of color, immigrants, refugees, seniors, and low-income families, who were less equipped with the tools necessary to compete in the job market.

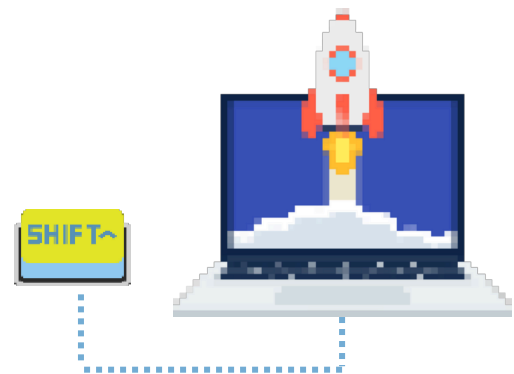


## MAPPING RESOURCES, ASSESSING GAPS

In July 2022, the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) pioneered a comprehensive digital equity asset map to centralize information on digital skills classes and digital resources. At the same time, the WDC launched a statewide digital equity survey of career counselor staff. The findings were a wake-up call: a mere 14% of our staff were equipped to gauge job seekers' digital needs, and the lack of digital tools and training stood as formidable obstacles for employment.

## PARTNERSHIP TO EXPAND DIGITAL ACCESS

In December 2022, our vision attracted almost \$1 million in Department of Commerce Digital Navigator funds. We formed a consortium between WDC, City of Seattle IT, King County IT, Make Digital Equity and Seattle Libraries to deliver affordable internet, modern devices, and comprehensive digital training.



### \$1 MILLION IN INITIAL FUNDING



+\$185,000 EXTENSION



### LOCAL CONSORTIUM



The Seattle Public Library

Make Digital Equity

# PROGRAM IMPACT

With a streamlined process, the WDC empowered organizations who were embedded in community, connected to marginalized populations heavily impacted by the digital divide. We distributed \$884,750 to 12 community organizations, directly impacting 3,160 individuals. Approaches were tailored to the unique digital needs of each community, from disseminating laptops and securing internet access to boosting digital literacy.

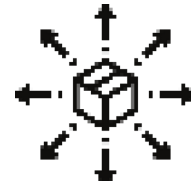
# PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

- 3,160 participants
- 90% BIPOC
- 89% low income
- 55% with language barriers
- 23% seniors
- 17% in unstable housing
- 14% justice involved



## TECHNOLOGY DISTRIBUTION

To address immediate hardware needs, the program distributed 250 hotspots and 600 laptops. However, the demand for these resources far exceeded the supply, highlighting the ongoing need for technology access.



## DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING

2,418 individuals received digital skills training, with a clear demand for further and more advanced instruction. Participants stated a desire to learn practical skills around digital safety, using Zoom, Microsoft Office, basic computer operations, and online job applications.



## APPLICATION SUPPORT

The program assisted over 250 individuals to connect to the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) despite challenges with the application process.



## PROGRESS MASTERING DIGITAL SKILLS

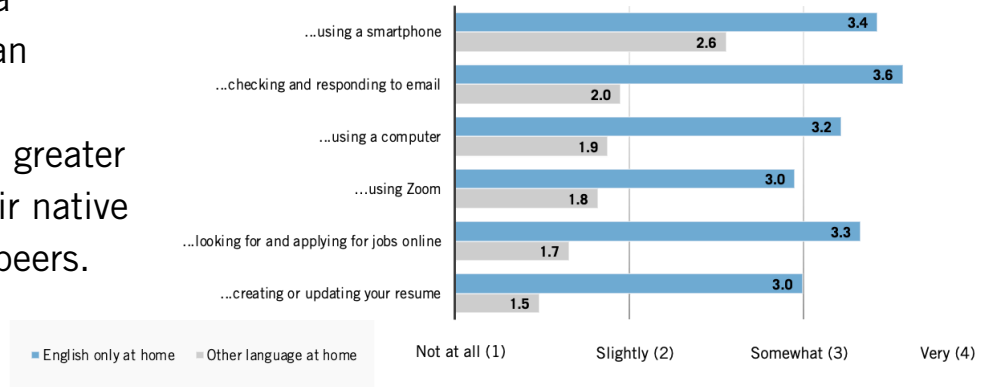
All post-survey results indicate digital skills growth in all computer tasks and digital skills areas that were measured. The program was effective at serving those furthest from opportunity and allowing organizations to have flexibility in how they administer programs to reach the common outcomes.

# RESEARCH INSIGHTS

The evaluation identified significant disparities in technology access among participants. Overall, the three digital tasks participants were least comfortable with were job-related: creating or updating a resume, applying for jobs online, and using Zoom.

## Effect of Language on Comfort Performing Tech Tasks

Those that spoke a language other than English at home experienced much greater difficulty than their native English-speaking peers.



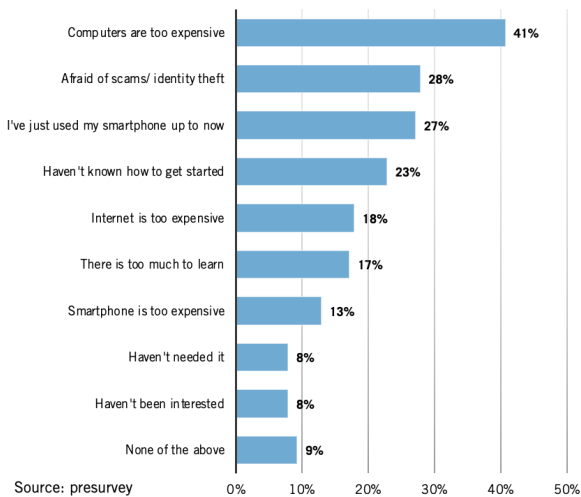
Source: WDC intake data

**Key Takeaway:** Digital instruction must be in the language of the learner to be effective.

Cost remained the largest barrier to technology, with fear of scams and identity theft a significant second.

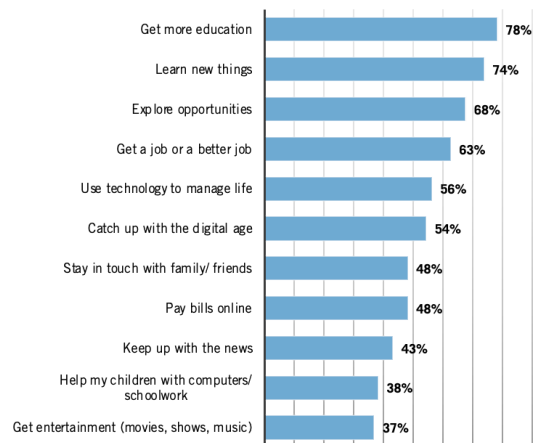
Most individuals reported that they want to use technology for education, opportunities, and to get a job.

### Reasons for not using technology



Source: presurvey

### Digital Skills: What respondents want to do with technology



Source: presurvey

(Seattle's [Technology Adoption & Access Study](#) showed similar findings.)

## METHODS

The evaluation used quantitative and qualitative approaches, including pre- and post-surveys, interviews with staff, and focus groups with participants. The evaluation reviewed intake data for 1,911 participants and partners' final reports. Surveys were accessible in multiple languages, and focus groups were conducted both in-person and online, with appropriate linguistic support.



Applied Inference

Making data talk since 1987

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# Evaluation of the WDC Digital Navigator Program

*Prepared for:*  
Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

*Prepared by:*  
Applied Inference  
Elizabeth Moore, PhD  
March 2024

# Contents

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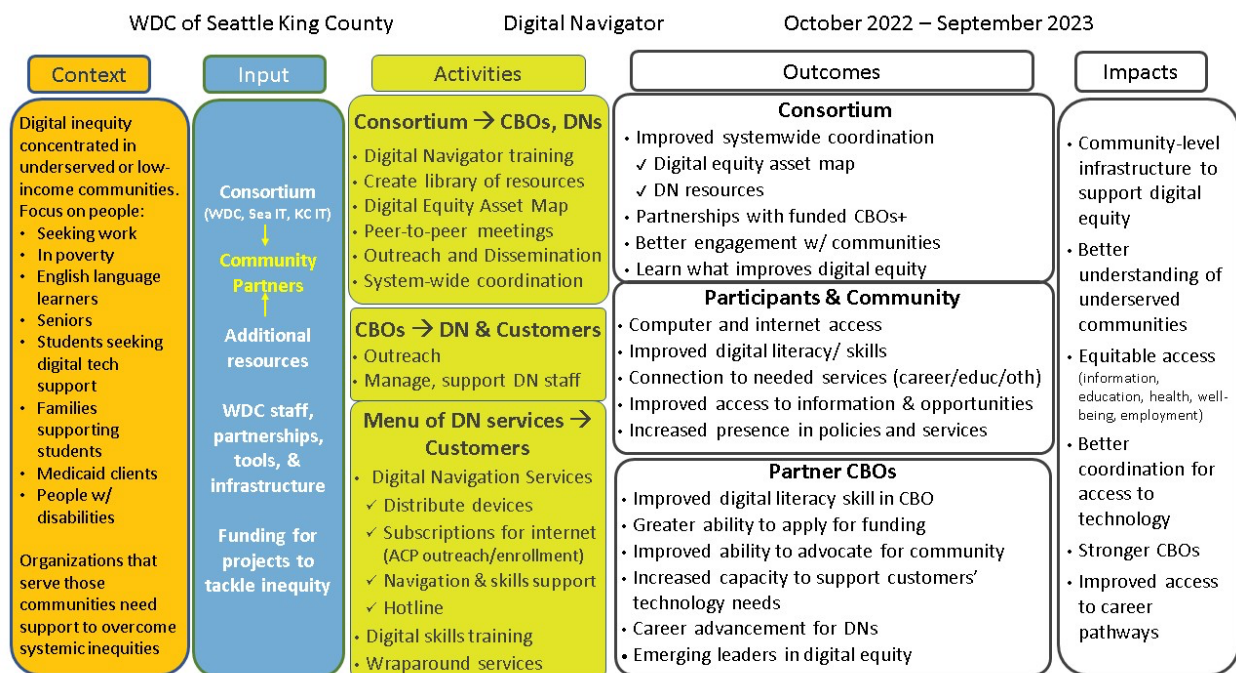
- Background..... 1**
- Methods ..... 2**
- Summary ..... 4**
  - Technology access ..... 4*
  - Digital skills ..... 6*
  - Programs and assessment Outcome ..... 7*
  - Recommendations ..... 8*
- Needs Assessment ..... 11**
- Digital Navigator Program: Describe and Assess Implementations..... 22**
  - Program Types..... 22*
    - Offered courses of at least four sessions ..... 22
    - Introductory workshop ..... 28
    - One on one..... 29
    - Self-study..... 31
- Barriers to gaining technology skills..... 34**
- Feedback to the WDC ..... 35**
- Recommendations and suggestions ..... 36**
- Appendix I – Partner Organization Summaries..... 40**
  - Casa Latina Summary..... 40*
  - Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC) Summary ..... 49*
  - East African Community Services (EACS) Summary..... 52*
  - El Centro de la Raza Summary ..... 40*
  - Friendship Circle Summary ..... 57*
  - Horn of Africa Services (HOAS) Summary..... 46*
  - Khmer Community of Seattle King County (KCSKC) Summary..... 45*
  - Sound Generations Summary ..... 58*
  - Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle Summary..... 40*
  - World Relief of Western Washington Summary..... 63*
  - Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC) Summary ..... 44*
  - Uplift Northwest Summary..... 60*

# Background

The State of Washington Department of Commerce (Commerce) awarded a grant to the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) to partner with community organizations to provide Digital Navigator services to underserved communities in the region. Commerce defined Digital Navigators as “trusted guides who assist community members in internet adoption and the use of computing devices.” The purpose of the project was to “advance digital literacy skills, digital equity, and connectivity” in Washington. This project was initially projected to run from October 2022 through June 2023. With support from JP Morgan Chase, funding was extended through September 2023 for eight of the 12 partners who opted into the extension.

The WDC conducted broad outreach to partner organizations and other community-based organizations that served populations most affected by the digital divide. Further, the WDC collaborated with King County and Seattle IT to reach out to specific organizations that had expressed interest in prior digital literacy and navigation funding opportunities. In addition to their ability to provide culturally literate Digital Navigation and Skills assistance for community members with limited access to and/or knowledge of technology, the WDC also prioritized organizations whose participation would strengthen their ability to compete for future digital services grants from other funders.

The logic model below illustrates how the Digital Navigator Program was expected to provide underserved and low-income communities with access to technology and the skills and support to use that technology.



Twelve partners were selected to design and deliver culturally relevant Digital Navigation services appropriate for the communities they serve. These were:

- Casa Latina
- Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC)
- East African Community Services (EACS)
- El Centro de la Raza
- Friendship Circle of Washington
- Horn of Africa Services (HOAS)
- Khmer Community of Seattle King County (KCSKC)
- Sound Generations
- Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC)
- Uplift Northwest
- Urban League
- World Relief

Two of these partners, Urban League and El Centro de la Raza, were funded using WIOA funds.

The goals of this evaluation were to create a needs assessment related to digital access and literacy within each community and to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Digital Navigator Program at each organization to meet participants' needs. The results of this evaluation are expected to support decision-making for greater impact in future programs aimed at digital equity.

## Methods

The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather information to address both evaluation questions. Methods included pre- and post-surveys with a subset of participants at most organizations, interviews with Digital Navigators and their supervisors at most organizations, and focus groups with participants. In addition, the evaluation relied on the intake data collected by the WDC from most participating organizations.

Because many participants were English Language Learners (ELL), the pre- and post-surveys were translated into Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Dari, Arabic, Somali, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

Some focus groups were conducted via Zoom and some in person. Focus groups with ELL participants were supported by bilingual interpreters, whether by Zoom or in person. The focus group methodology for in-person groups depended on the staff's assessment of what would be most suitable for their group. When these groups were large enough, we used a mutual interviewing methodology in which participants interviewed each other, using a subset of prepared questions. If the group was large and this method was deemed unsuitable, the group was divided into four subgroups and interviewers moved from group to group asking questions on their topic. When fewer than eight participants, a traditional focus group methodology was used where the facilitator worked to stimulate discussion around a set of questions.

Separate Zoom focus groups were conducted with: Ukrainian speakers and Dari speakers from World Relief; Spanish speakers from El Centro de la Raza; and Afaan Oromo speakers, Amharic speakers, and Tigrinya speakers from Horn of Africa Services. In person focus groups with interpreters were



conducted at: Casa Latina (Spanish), the Khmer Community of Seattle King County (Khmer), Puget Sound Training Center (Spanish), and East African Community Services (Somali). In person focus groups were also conducted in English at the Friendship Circle of Washington, Sound Generations, Uplift Northwest, and the Urban League. CISC staff opted to conduct an in person focus group with their participants on their own, using our prepared questions, providing notes of responses.

Interviews with program staff and managers were conducted over Zoom, usually in English though in two cases, the interviewer also used Spanish.

Focus group and interview data were coded using Atlas.ti. Using this software, comments are coded according to themes that emerge over the course of the coding process. When codes emerge in later documents, the previous documents are then recoded with the new code in mind.

Individual reports for each partner organization were provided (see Appendix I for summaries). This report summarizes those results based on:

- Nine (9) in-person focus group with 108 participants.
  - Four of these groups were with English speakers.
  - Two groups were with Spanish speakers (six interpreters),
  - One group was with Khmer speakers (four interpreters),
  - One group was with Somali speakers (one interpreter),
  - One group was with Chinese speakers (four interpreters).
- Seven (7) online focus groups with 57 participants: two in Spanish; one each in Dari, Ukrainian, Amharic, Afaan Oromo, and Tigrinya. Each group included a bilingual interpreter.
- Presurveys with 255 participants.
- Postsurveys with 127 participants.
- Eleven (11) interviews with DNs in 7 interviews. 9 written responses from DNs
- Six (6) interviews with program managers; 1 written response from a program manager
- WDC Intake data for 1943 participants.
- Partners' final reports submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 to September 2023.

## Summary

As interviewees and participants alike emphasized, access to technology is critical for those seeking to be fully integrated in society, find and perform work, and access basic services. However, the cost of both the hardware and the internet access can be prohibitive and training programs are inaccessible if they are delivered in a language in which the participants are not fluent. The Digital Navigator Program (DNP), with the offer of laptops and low-cost internet, especially when combined with in-language instruction, addressed an important need.

## Technology access

Overall, about a quarter of participants had a working computer at home when they enrolled in the DNP. Although those who spoke only English at home were significantly more likely to have a computer at home, having low income emerged as most powerful predictor of home computer access and having any home internet access. Table S1 shows home technology access for all 1,641 participants with sufficient data<sup>1</sup> in a table with two income categories (low income: n=1506 (92%) and higher income: n=135 (8%)) by two language categories (English-only at home: n=582 (35%) and Other languages at home: n=1059 (65%)) by five access measures.

Language spoken at home	English only (n=582, 35%)	Other languages (n=1059, 65%)	Total (n=1641)
<b>Low income (n=1506, 92%)</b>	n=531/1641 (32%) n=531/1506 (35%)	n=975/1641 (59%) n=975/1506 (65%)	<b>All Low</b>
# (%) with home computer	182 (34%)	153 (16%)	<b>335/1506 (22%)</b>
# (%) with phone data only	215 (41%)	252 (26%)	467 (31%)
# (%) with paid plan	199 (38%)	472 (48%)	671 (45%)
# (%) with ACP	93 (18%)	149 (15%)	242 (16%)
# (%) with no home internet	95 (18%)	208 (21%)	303 (20%)
<b>Higher income (n=135, 8%)</b>	n=51/1641 (3%) n=51/135(38%)	n=84/1641 (5%) n=84/135 (62%)	<b>All Higher</b>
# (%) with home computer	42/51 (82%)	40/84 (48%)	<b>82/135 (61%)</b>
# (%) with phone data only	2 (4%)	8 (10%)	10 (7%)
# (%) with paid plan	44 (86%)	69 (82%)	113 (84%)
# (%) with ACP	0 (0%)	14 (17%)	14 (10%)
# (%) with no home internet	3 (6%)	5 (6%)	8 (6%)
<b>Total (n=1641)</b>	<b>All Eng Only</b>	<b>All Oth Lang</b>	<b>Totals</b>
# (%) with home computer	<b>224/582 (38%)</b>	<b>193/1059 (18%)</b>	<b>417/1641 (25%)</b>
# (%) with phone data only	217 (37%)	260 (25%)	477 (29%)
# (%) with paid plan	243 (42%)	541 (51%)	783 (48%)
# (%) with ACP	93 (16%)	163 (15%)	256 (16%)
# (%) with no home internet	98 (19%)	213 (20%)	311 (20%)

Measures included: the percentage with home computers and the percentages with different types of internet access (paid data plan, phone data only, ACP) or no access at all. The bottom right cell contains the table totals for all participants. For example, it shows that 25% of all participants had a working computer at home when they enrolled in the DNP. The other cells answer the question: was access the same for everyone? Regardless of language? Regardless of income?

<sup>1</sup> Includes participants who provided both home computer and home internet information.

The middle two **columns** contain the technology access rates for those who speak only English at home (left-most) and those who speak other languages at home (right-most). The middle two **rows** contain the technology access rates for low-income participants (top set of numbers) and higher income participants (second set of numbers).

The far-left column contains the labels for the technology access measures. The far-right column contains the row totals (regardless of language). The bottom row shows the column totals (regardless of income). For example, this table shows that people with low income (regardless of language) were far less likely to have a working computer at home (22% vs. 61%), and the English-only households were about twice as likely to have a working computer at home (38% vs. 18%).

The four cells inside the table show the same information within the income and language combinations. For example, comparing the home computer line in the low- and higher income rows shows that the language effect holds regardless of income level, specifically, English-only households are about twice as likely to have a home computer as households speaking other languages at home.

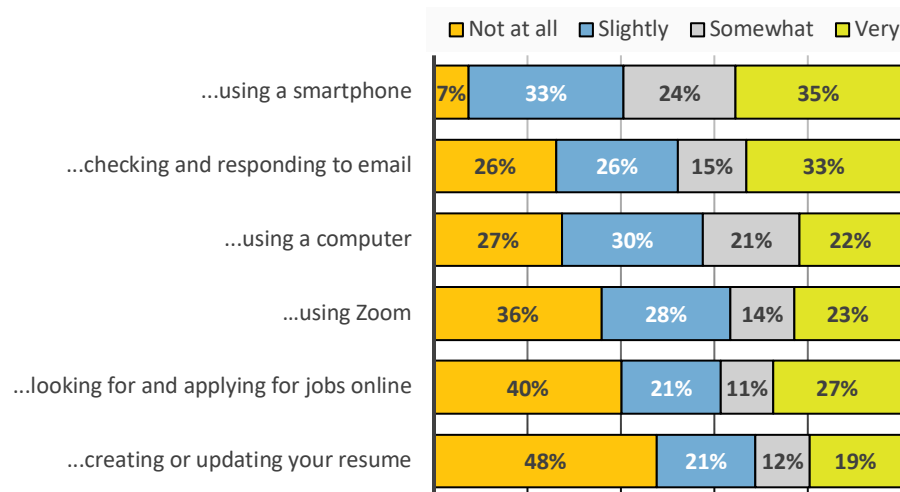
Let's look at the next data line (the number and percentage with a smartphone data plan as their only internet access). Among low-income participants, more English-only speakers used a phone data plan as their only internet access than their counterparts who speak other languages at home (41% vs. 26%). This pattern does not hold at higher income levels where English-only households are far less likely to have internet access only through their smartphones (4%) and less likely than their counterparts speaking other languages (10%).

This table also shows that 16% of participants were enrolled in ACP when they started with the DNP, regardless of language spoken at home. Digital navigators (DNs) provided information about ACP to a total of 2,634 participants and helped 279 enroll. However, in interviews DN's reported that the application process was confusing for them and for their customers, especially in the presence of a language barrier. Among other conflicting descriptions some DN's thought a social security number or other indication of legal status was required; some participants thought having children at home was required. Further, DN's and case managers alike found the application process excessively time-consuming and sometimes bafflingly- even impossibly – difficult.

## Digital skills

Figure S1 illustrates participants' overall level of comfort performing six technology tasks, listed to the left of this figure. About one-third said they were "Very comfortable" using a smartphone and

**Figure S1. Comfort Performing Various Tech Tasks**



Source: WDC intake data

using email. Those percentages are represented by the outer segment of the first two bars (light green). Another 24% were "Somewhat comfortable" using a smartphone, as were another 15% using email. Those responses are illustrated in the

next segment (gray). The innermost segment (orange) reflects the percentage who said they were not at all comfortable with the task (only 7% for smartphones, but a quarter for using email). The remaining segment, next to the inside segment (blue) represents the percentage who said they were only "Slightly comfortable." This figure shows little comfort performing most of these important digital tasks, with the least comfort reported in looking for and applying for jobs, and creating or updating a resume. Again, are all groups equally comfortable and uncomfortable performing these tasks?

**Predictors of digital skill level:** Unlike the analysis of predictors of technology access, analysis of predictors of digital skill level showed that language spoken at home (and not income level) was the most significant predictor of digital skills. Participants who spoke English at home were more comfortable performing all the tasks. (Language of instruction, along with the availability of a supportive teacher were the most powerful predictors of being able to *gain* digital skills through the DNP.) Limited education was also an important factor in initial skill level. Unsurprisingly, as the level of education increased, so did comfort with these tasks.

For some, limited education could be confounded with unmeasured factors such as learning or memory difficulties, whether from age, life circumstances such as trauma or anxiety, or a disability (most frequently identified among those who spoke English at home). Focus group participants and interviewees described some of these challenges in addition to others, such as participants' fear that they cannot learn the material. DNs at several organizations discussed how their awareness of these challenges influenced teaching methods. They emphasized the importance of teaching with "emotional literacy," compassion, patient repetition, and cultural relevancy. Some of these concerns recalled research on stereotype threat where learners perform below their ability because of the anxiety generated by a fear of confirming a stereotype of inferior ability they know to be held about a

group to which they belong. Similar dynamics can also affect participants' willingness to ask questions in class.

Income emerged as a *less* powerful predictor of digital skills, possibly because most DNP participants qualified as low income (resulting in less variability for analysis) or because low income could be closely related to the other factors (language and education).

Survey respondents were given a list of technology skills they might want to learn. Those who speak a language other than English at home selected fewer topics from that list compared with their English-only counterparts, but both groups were most interested in:

- Digital safety (recognizing and avoiding scams, preventing identity theft, avoiding viruses)
- Using Zoom
- Using Microsoft Office
- Basics of using a computer
- How to apply for a job online.

## Programs and assessment of outcomes and impacts

The DNP supported some partners with continuing or expanding their existing program, it allowed others to experiment with an individualized DN model, and it provided an opportunity for others to offer digital literacy for the first time. Interviewees in this last group noted that the DNP gave them the opportunity to become more aware of their communities' need for digital access and literacy. One person said their organization had not realized that their community was "starving" for this resource. Some noted that digital literacy is becoming mandatory to participate in modern American society, from ordering in restaurants to getting and retaining a quality job to completing immigration or important other government applications and forms.

Digital Navigators distributed 250 hotspots and 600 laptops, in addition to about another 200 laptops donated separately to World Relief for distribution. Half the partners (PSTC, Urban League, Uplift Northwest, EACS, CISC, and HOAS<sup>2</sup>) were explicit that the demand for laptops far exceeded the supply. Some addressed this shortage by distributing laptops on a first-come, first-served basis; others defined qualifications, such as participating in a class. In addition, more than 1300 people received digital skills training, more than 2500 received information about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), and more than 250 people received assistance applying for the ACP.

Analysis showed that people need help to learn technology, whether the information is delivered in an in-person or virtual class setting (7 participating programs), in a short workshop (4 programs), or in intensive one-on-one sessions (2 programs). Participants were satisfied with most methods of receiving the skills training portion of the DNP and they reported substantial skill gains in surveys and focus groups. Many requested additional and more advanced training, while others requested a repetition of the class already attended or a slower pace for better learning. Responses from the two programs with very limited interpersonal guidance showed that independent learning or online self-paced learning modules were less effective without guided instruction, and the instruction must be in a language they understand to be effective. Regardless of the type of instruction, participants in all programs deeply appreciated the opportunities that *were* provided by the DNP.

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<sup>2</sup> This may have been the situation for Casa Latina and El Centro de la Raza as well, but since those partners defined smaller eligible groups (course completers), the shortfall may not have been as notable.

Participants who spoke languages other than English at home were not aware of other resources for learning about technology, and those that were noted both a language barrier and a transportation barrier. Nearly all agreed that they wanted to learn these skills from the DNP instead of through family members or co-workers because family members may lack the knowledge, skill, and patience to teach them and those who mentioned co-workers did not want to continue to “bother” them. The DNP confirmed a deep need and pointed the way to responding to it.

Overall, most participants were satisfied with the programs and would recommend them, and for most programs, they reported an average increase in technology skill of about a quarter of the scale used. Some of the specific impacts mentioned in order of frequency were:

- strengthened community and communication;
- Increased confidence;
- Improved learning/ school participation;
- enabled them to help their children with computers or with their schoolwork;
- improved ability to catch up or participate more fully;
- improved English skills;
- better manage life/make life easier (including immigration papers, photos of official letters to case managers);
- job search/ apply for jobs;
- use translation apps;
- other specific software skills;
- “open the world”;
- get around/navigate in a new locale using Maps;
- relieve stress and anxiety;
- organize files, passwords.

## Recommendations

- ✓ As much as possible, continue to facilitate the availability of digital devices and training. Technical skills and technology access are critical to 21<sup>st</sup> century success in learning, employment, and meeting basic needs.
- ✓ Several interviewees would have liked more opportunity to interact with other DNs, possibly through in person meetings or breakout rooms in Zoom. DNs wanted to learn from each other and possibly solve problems together. For example, the instructor at El Centro de la Raza has developed extensive use of technology to support his participants which other instructors might value learning about. Opportunities to talk in small groups could make all the programs more effective, perhaps through weekly informal, lightly facilitated DN check-ins. *Evaluator’s note:* all interviewees who mentioned this suggestion mentioned in person meetings. It could also be useful to provide an asynchronous online forum where members can ask questions and share resources, ideas, successes, and challenges between meetings.
- ✓ In-language instruction emerged as a consistently critical component of accessible instruction. Participants who tried to learn using a language they did not understand expressed frustration and a lack of progress. The Digital Equity Asset Map by the WDC ( <https://www.seekingwdc.org/digital-equity-asset-map> ) points to instruction in several languages, as well as resources for low-cost computers and internet access. However, despite the WDC’s and its consortium partners’ efforts

to disseminate this information, a significant need for heightened awareness and targeted outreach to Digital Navigator remains.

- ✓ The most effective training approaches depended on the needs of the participants.
  - For groups with roughly the same level of skill, **in-language workshops** or a series of workshops were effective.
  - If the participants' circumstances were stable enough to continue attending a series of classes, weekly (or better, twice weekly) **in-language classes** were effective.
  - For groups with idiosyncratic learning needs or idiosyncratic knowledge gaps, **intensive one-on-one instruction** was most effective.

A pre-assessment of participants' skill levels and knowledge gaps can help identify the most effective training approach.

Regardless of the style of instruction, many interviewees discussed the importance of meeting the participants with patience and compassion, and with respectful cultural relevancy. Some of the strategies used to combat stereotype threat might be usefully adapted by DNs. Here is one resource: <https://ctl.wustl.edu/resources/reducing-stereotype-threat/>

- ✓ Self-study or more brief one-on-one interactions were sometimes all that was available. Some participants were able to succeed with this relatively independent approach to learning, but not as many as succeeded with patient instruction. However, the demand for training can outpace the availability of instruction. Accordingly, it may be useful to strengthen the options for self-study.

- Consider developing a step-by-step self-study curriculum (see detailed recommendations below for a list of possible topics), illustrated with graphics and screenshots and translated into multiple languages to support those who are trying to learn on their own. Class participants could also benefit from such a resource as many indicated their difficulty remembering material from one class to the next. Such a resource would be even more effective if an in-language interpersonal help resource were available to get over stumbling blocks.

Uplift Northwest interviewees learned that few of those who attempted all modules in the Northstar Digital Literacy platform completed it. Several focus group participants reported stumbling over the Information Literacy session and asked for a workshop on it and on the Job Search module. More participants might have been able to complete all the modules if they had thought to ask for help.

- In translated materials, include the English names for computer components and tasks to make it easier for participants who will transition into an English language technology class.
  - Consider inviting ongoing connection, such as recruiting DN and customers alike into a Community of Practice if they would like to receive occasional "tech tips," where they might learn about new technology, or how to use parental controls, or some other technical information of interest.
- ✓ Just over a quarter of focus group participants said they'd like to share their new knowledge of technology skills with other learners. Encourage partners to develop a volunteer corps of graduates to help with classes or to form a technology club to help each other learn new skills and to support newcomers as they enroll.
  - ✓ Interviewees suggested creating short explanatory videos about ACP in multiple languages so that potential customers (and DNs) can fully understand the program and make an informed decision as to its suitability for each situation. It may be important to emphasize that this is a government

program (and not a scam), that low income is the only requirement (not documentation of legal status, children in the home, or participation in a benefit program), the quality of the connection, the anticipated monthly cost, and how to apply.

- ✓ If possible, simplify the application process for ACP, especially on the questions where applicants tend to discontinue their application.
- ✓ Some interviewees asked for a survey of available and affordable resources. For example, what courses can participants take through the Seattle Public Library (SPL) or other public agencies? Casa Latina had developed a partnership with SPL where the library provided laptops and hotspots for a several-month period, giving Casa Latina a computer lab for classes. CISC worked with SPL to provide an English language app for interested participants. This information might have been helpful for DNs whose students want to continue learning. Consider documenting these resources in a handout for job seekers and other customers, with regular updates as resources change and as new participant interests emerge. Additionally, ensure that community partners and navigators are aware of the WDC's Digital Equity Asset Map webpage to provide options for their customers in need of low-cost devices or digital instruction in a language other than English.
- ✓ Some asked for professional development for DNs, such as:
  - a variety of training courses to develop their skills and to improve the services they offer. Some said they want to use that material to create courses in their participants' languages;
  - how to break complex material into smaller pieces to create a step-by-step series of lessons that build and deepen understanding over time;
  - how DN can communicate their DN work experience so it will be meaningful across industries for their future careers;
  - *Evaluator's note:* consider a workshop on how to recognize possible learning disabilities or other learning difficulties, and ideas for how to address them.
- ✓ Some asked for more guidance on how to implement a DNP. For some, that meant getting a checklist of topics to include in an introductory course or for getting individual newcomers started, for others it meant getting more information about the goals and parameters of the program: what might a DNP look like?
- ✓ Consider incorporating adaptive technology, and training DNs on the use of that technology for individuals with disabilities that make keyboards a particular challenge, such as devices with touchscreens.



# Detailed Findings

## Needs Assessment

Most DNP participants were women (59%) and 90% were BIPOC: Black (30%), Indigenous (1%), Latinx (10%), Asian (40%), and Other or Multi-Racial (8%). Survey respondents averaged 41 years of age, with a range from 19 to 81 years. One-quarter of participants lived alone, 28% lived with one other person. About half were unemployed and looking for work, 27% were working, 18% were homemakers, 16% were students. About 5% each were retired or disabled.

Most project participants were immigrants or refugees who spoke a language other than English at home (67%). Figure 1 shows the range of languages represented by DNP participants. Interviewees pointed out that additional languages are likely to emerge depending on world events leading to immigration or asylum seeking.

**Figure 1. Languages spoken at home by DNP participants**



Five additional languages were represented by two speakers each:  
 ✓ Creole,  
 ✓ Kibembe,  
 ✓ Kinyarwanda,  
 ✓ Kurdi, and Orminian.  
 Six additional languages were represented by one speaker each:  
 ✓ Bulgarian,  
 ✓ Japanese (also English),  
 ✓ Yupik (also English),  
 ✓ Pashto,  
 ✓ Romanian, and  
 ✓ Samoan

Figure 1 illustrates 19 of the languages spoken by DNP participants<sup>3</sup> and includes another 11 with one or two speakers each for a total of 30 different languages represented by DNP participants. Eight of these participants indicated that they also speak English at home. Survey respondents spoke 14 different languages at home.

Digital skills classes were available through DNP partners in seven languages: English (Urban League, PSTC), Spanish (Casa Latina,

Source: WDC intake data

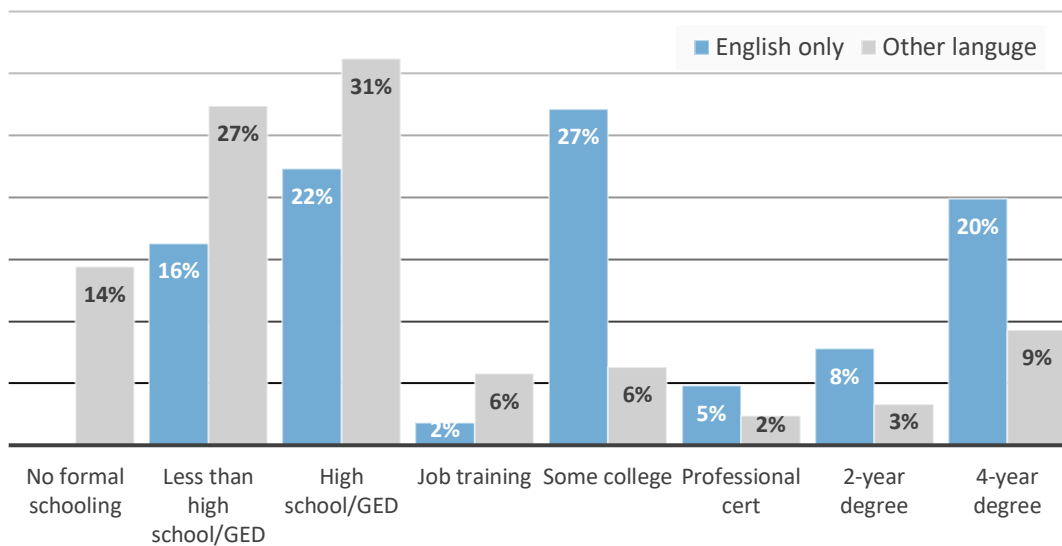
El Centro de la Raza), Cantonese (CISC), Mandarin (CISC), Amharic (HOAS), Afaan Oromo (HOAS),

<sup>3</sup> Some data were unavailable and may be imputed. Specifically, demographic data were not available for Uplift Northwest customers, but interviewees did not mention a language barrier, so those 453 participants were inferred to be English speakers.

and Khmer (KCSKC). Additionally, EACS offered a 2-hour introductory workshop in Somali and PSTC offered one-on-one sessions to help participants get started with computers in Ukrainian, Dari, and Arabic, leaving speakers of 19 languages without in-language support, something focus group participants and interviewees identified as a significant barrier to achieving digital literacy. Although the languages of classes offered accounted for the majority of participants, with the exception of Spanish, in-language classes were each offered only at one organization, though speakers of those languages were spread out at more than one organization. Regrettably, the only cross-organizational referrals mentioned were from Casa Latina and PSTC to El Centro de la Raza for classes in Spanish. Thus, language remains a barrier to developing digital skills for many.

Limited education was also identified as a barrier to developing digital skills for many. Figure 2 shows the distribution of education level for those who speak a language other than English at home and that of English-only speakers.

**Figure 2. Education by Language Category**



Source: WDC intake data

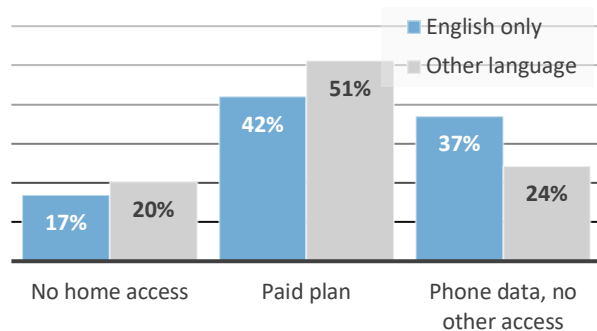
Figure 2 shows that 60% of the English-only speakers had attended at least some college, and 20% had earned a four-year degree. In comparison, only 21% of those who spoke other languages at home had attended at least some college, about half of them having earned a four-year degree. The presurvey asked about learning difficulties in school. Significantly more respondents with English fluency confirmed a learning issue (21% vs. 8%), while more respondents who spoke a language other than English indicated a circumstantial issue (12% vs. 2%). The higher rate of learning issues among the English speakers may point to another barrier to developing digital skills.

Nearly all participants (89%) indicated that they had low income<sup>4</sup>. These interconnected factors in turn may be mediated by specific learning barriers for some participants, a question for future research.

Overall, 26% of participants had a working computer at home. Although English speakers were significantly more likely to have a computer at home (38% vs. 18%), low income emerged as the greater barrier to having a working computer at home (22% vs. 63%). However, a Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) examining the simultaneous effect of income, education, and English-only at home on having a working computer at home showed that **income** was the strongest predictor (low income was associated with a lower prevalence of home computer ownership), followed by **language** expanding the equation’s predictive ability. (English-only speakers were more likely to have a computer at home even after taking income into account.) Once income level and language were taken into account, education level did not make a significant contribution to predicting home computer access. However, despite the statistical significance of the resulting predictive equation, it accounted for only 11% of the variance in whether households had a working computer at enrollment in the DNP. This relatively modest predictive ability indicates that important factors influencing home computer ownership were not available to the analysis.

Overall, 81% of participants had home internet access (15% via ACP), slightly more English-only speakers than others (83% vs. 80%) and fewer with low income (80% vs. 94%). Figures 3 and 4 show the differences in how participants obtained home internet depending on language and income.

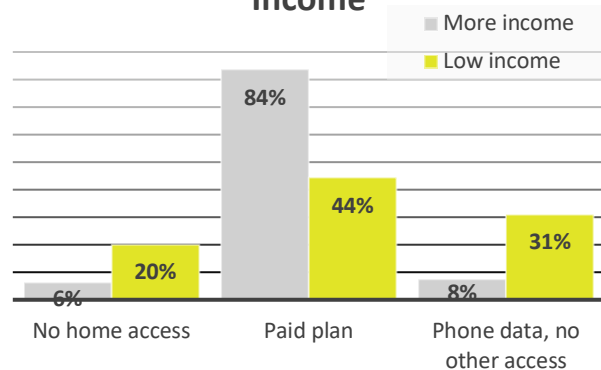
**Figure 3. Internet Access by Language Category**



*A few in each group accessed the internet in other ways (e.g. children's school hotspot, shelter Wi-Fi, etc).*

Source: WDC intake data

**Figure 4. Internet Access by Income**



*A few in each group accessed the internet in other ways (e.g. children's school hotspot, shelter Wi-Fi, etc).*

Source: WDC intake data

These figures show that English skills have some relationship with the type of internet access: speakers of other languages were more likely to have a paid internet plan than English speakers and less likely than English speakers to rely on their smartphone’s data plan. English speakers are almost as likely to rely on their phone’s data plan as on a paid home internet plan. Participants with low-

<sup>4</sup> If Uplift Northwest participants can be imputed to have low income, this percentage increases to 91%.

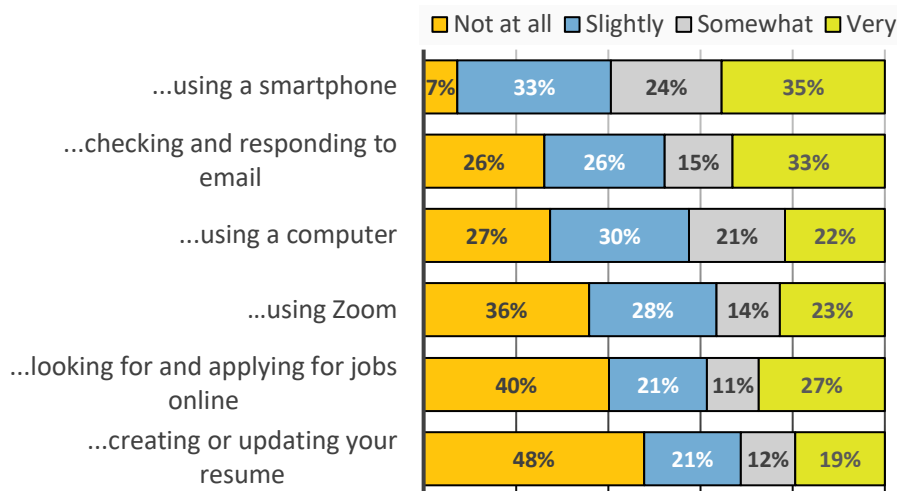
income, however, are less likely to have any home internet access (80% vs. 94%) and if they do, they are far less likely to have a paid internet plan, and more likely to rely on their smartphone only.

Analyzing these factors together with education shows that even all three factors do not predict group membership very effectively. Only income (the most powerful predictor) and education entered the equation to predict type of home internet access, if any. With three groups (no access, paid plan, phone), we would expect a 33% correct classification rate by chance alone. These factors improved classification over the chance rate, but not by much, correctly classifying 40%.

Despite limited home access, three-fourths of survey respondents indicate that they have used a computer and more (92%) had used the internet by the time they enrolled in the DNP.

Figure 5 shows participants' comfort performing various computer and internet tasks at enrollment in the DNP. Participants were the least uncomfortable using a smartphone (only 7% were not at all comfortable) but when it came to performing tasks on a computer, the discomfort increased significantly.

**Figure 5. Comfort Performing Various Tech Tasks**



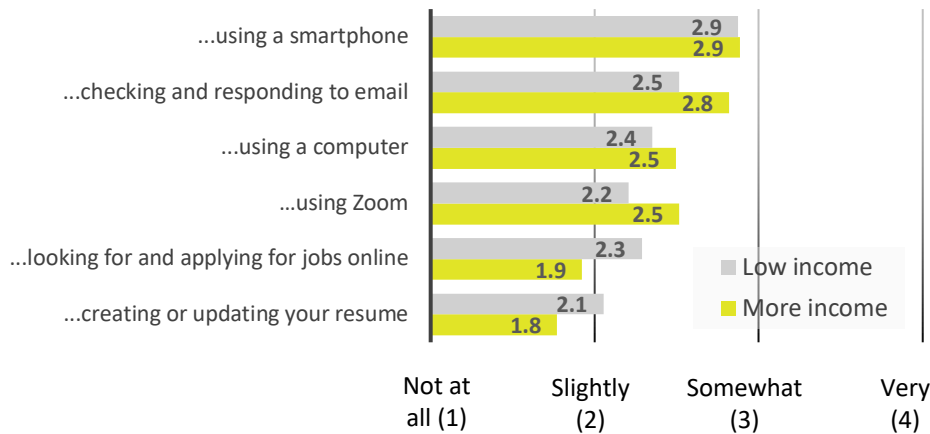
Source: WDC intake data

Figure 5 shows a range of comfort performing various computer and internet tasks. Between 20% and 35% report feeling “Very comfortable” performing these tasks. Is there a group that is “Very comfortable” with all these tech tasks? Or “Not at all comfortable” with all of them?

Yes to the first question: 12% of respondents indicated they were “Very comfortable” with all six tasks when they enrolled in the DNP. On the other hand, 53% did not select “Very comfortable” for any. Only 5% indicated that they were “Not at all comfortable” with any of the tasks.

Between 70% and 80% were less than “Very comfortable” with digital tasks needed to get a job (looking for and applying for jobs online, and creating and updating a resume).

**Figure 6. Effect of Income Level on Comfort Performing Tech Tasks**

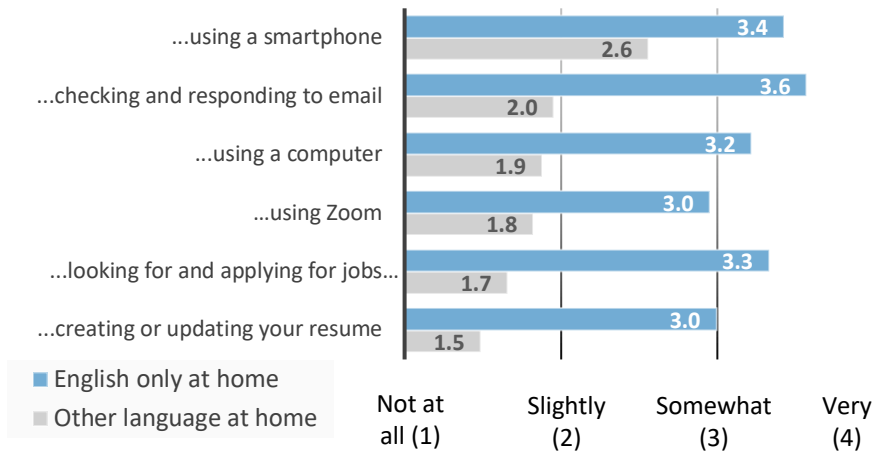


Source: WDC intake data

applying for jobs online, possibly because of more experience looking for work online.

Figure 7 shows a striking effect of language on participants' comfort with these tasks.

**Figure 7. Effect of Language on Comfort Performing Tech Tasks**



Source: WDC intake data

comfortable” and “Very comfortable” performing all tech tasks, while those who spoke some other language at home rated themselves between “Not at all comfortable” and “Slightly comfortable” performing five of the tasks, and between “Slightly” and “Somewhat” comfortable using a smartphone. Those who spoke only English at home rated themselves as “Very comfortable” performing between three and four of these tasks, while those who spoke other languages at home rated themselves as “Very comfortable” performing an average of less than one of them.

Is comfort with these tasks associated with income, English skills, or education? Figure 6 shows a small effect of income on five of these tasks: Those with more income said they were more comfortable using a computer, Zoom, and email, while those with less income were more comfortable working on their resumes and looking for and

This figure shows that those who speak only English at home reported significantly greater comfort performing all the computer and internet tasks than those who spoke other languages at home. This finding is the most extreme for job-related tasks.

On average, those who spoke only English at home rated themselves between “Somewhat

**Figure 8. Effect of Education on Comfort Performing Tech Tasks**

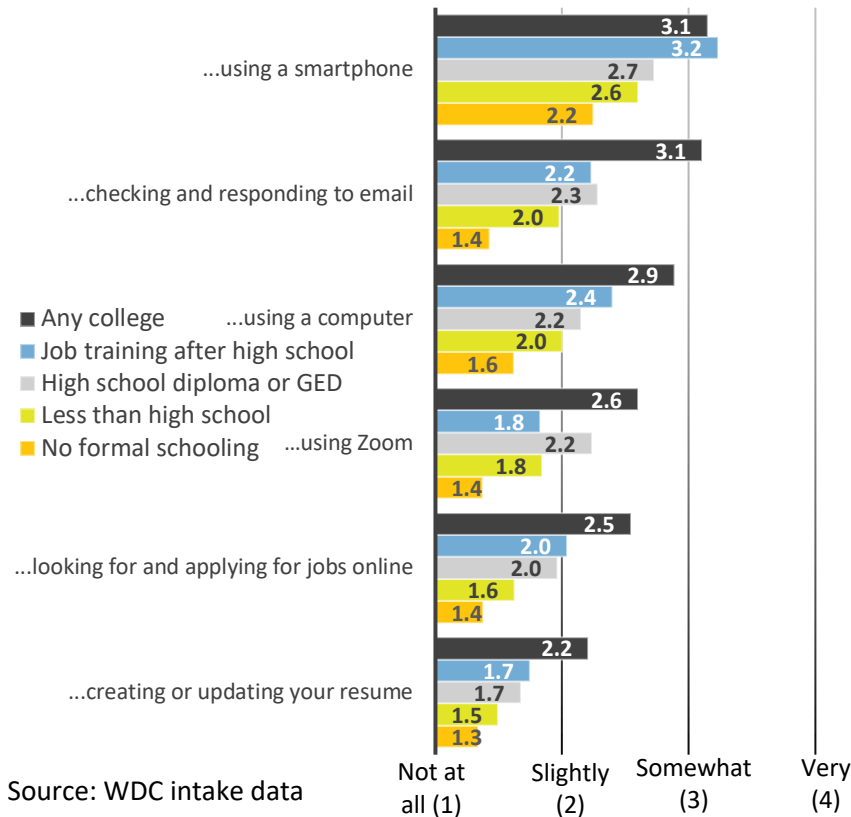


Figure 8 shows a consistent effect of education on participants' comfort performing all the tasks: Those with more education expressed more comfort, and those with less education expressed less.

Figure 9 shows that participants who have a working computer at home rated themselves as more comfortable performing all the technology tasks.

How do these factors interact? Are these findings the result of one factor which also influences the others? Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) addresses this question using four predictor variables: English-only at home; Education; Low income; and a Working computer at home. MRA revealed English-only at home as the most powerful predictor, with education a distant second for predicting comfort with each of the technology tasks in Figure 9.

**Figure 9. Effect of Having a Home Computer on Comfort Performing Tech Tasks**

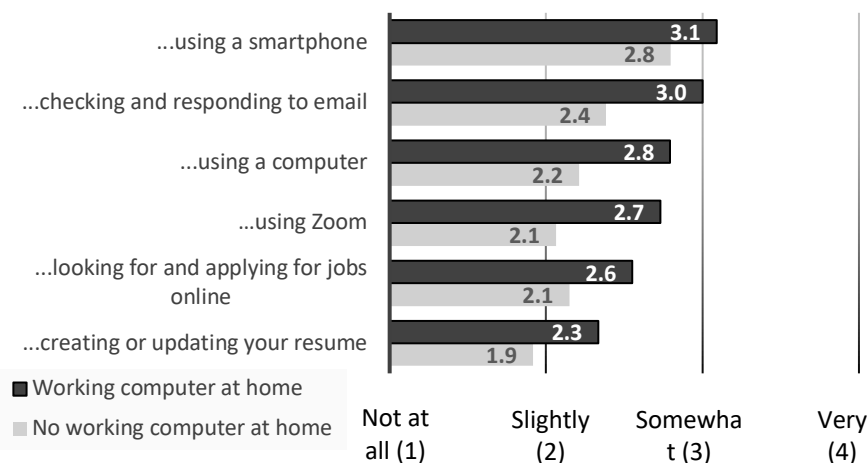


Table 1 shows that responses to the question, "How comfortable are you using smartphone," were influenced only by these two factors (home

language and education), and they accounted for 19.6% of the variance in participants' responses: those who spoke only English at home were more comfortable using a smartphone, especially if they

had more education. The other 80% could include unavailable data, like: age of the respondents, whether they have children, how they obtained their smartphone, their level of interest in technology, how long they've had their smartphone, type of smartphone, other demands on their time, and many other factors. Accounting for almost 20% of the variance is both statistically significant and meaningful. But these same four predictors accounted for more of the variance in the other tasks.

**Table 1. MRA results for comfort performing various computer and internet tasks**

(At enrollment) How comfortable are you...	Variance accounted for by				Total variance accounted for (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )
	English only at home	Educa- tion	Working computer at home	Low income	
...using a smartphone	17.0% ↑	2.7% ↑			19.6%
...checking and responding to email	40.0% ↑	6.0% ↑	.6% ↑		46.5%
..using a computer	32.3% ↑	4.2% ↑	1.1% ↑	.1% ↑	37.6%
...using Zoom	20.5% ↑	2.8% ↑	2.2%↑		25.3%
...looking for, applying for jobs online	39.4% ↑	1.8% ↑		1.4%↑	42.5%
...creating and updating your resume	36.0% ↑	1.0% ↑	.2% ↑	.9% ↑	38.1%

This table shows that:

- **Language spoken at home** is by far the most powerful predictor of participants' comfort performing these tasks. Specifically, consistent with Figure 7 above, those who speak only English at home were far more comfortable with these tasks. That factor alone accounts for at least 17% of the variance for all these tasks, and up to 40% of the variance when it comes to checking and responding to email. *That is an extraordinarily powerful predictor.*
- After taking into account the language spoken at home, **education** emerged as a consistent factor, but not as powerful. People with more education expressed more comfort performing the technology tasks, regardless of language spoken at home. Education had the greatest impact around comfort checking and responding to email and comfort using computers.
- After these two factors have been accounted for, **having a working computer at home** made a statistically significant but small contribution to the predictive model for most of the tasks which may rely on a computer. Those who had a working computer at home expressed more comfort performing some of the tasks.
- **Income level** had little to no predictive power in participants' comfort level with these technology tasks. Those with *less* income expressed more comfort with the employment-related items (looking for and applying for jobs online, and working on their resume). Technical note: income is a somewhat unreliable predictor variable for this sample. Nearly all participants indicated that they had low income (making it less effective as a predictor) and some of those who did not were out of the job market (retirees or youth) (making it also a confounded predictor for some).

Type of internet access was also associated with comfort performing these tasks. Other than comfort using Zoom, those who relied on access other than a paid plan (e.g., their smartphone, the shelter Wi-Fi, or some other resource) were similar in most responses and tended to have more comfort performing all the tasks. It may be that participants who reported finding internet access when home access was not available were those individuals who were already experienced technology users.

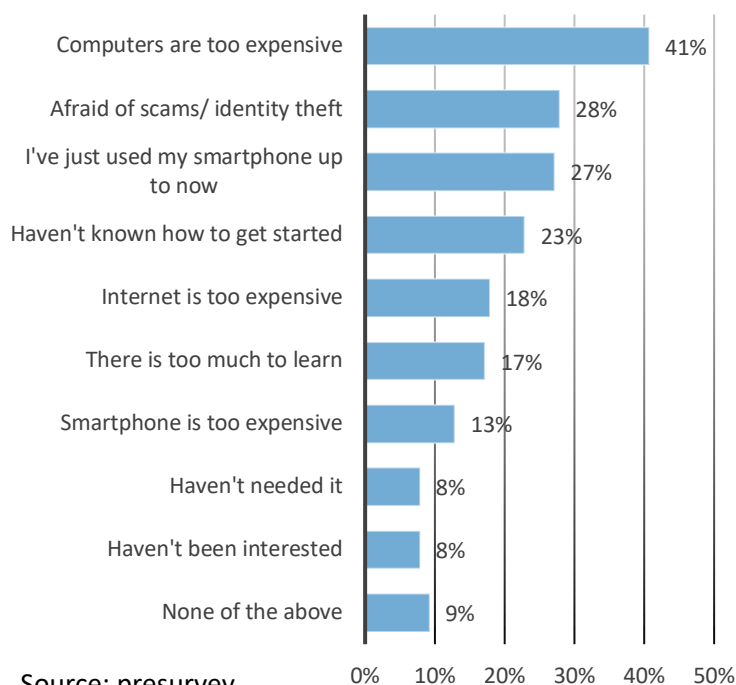
Others in similar unstable circumstances who were not already experienced technology users likely simply continued not using technology. Those with no home internet access tended to have less comfort on most tasks, but, again, except for comfort using Zoom, were similar to those with a paid plan.

**Thus, income is a relatively strong predictor of home computer ownership, but language spoken at home was most predictive for comfort using the computer (or other technology).**

Figure 10 shows ten barriers that some survey respondents indicated have prevented them from using technology in the past, or from using it more than they have. No differences due to English fluency

were detected in response to these ten barriers, while Figure 11 shows responses on the four barriers separately for those who self-identified as fluent in English and those who did not.

**Figure 10. Reasons for not using technology**



The top reason given for not having used technology prior to the DNP, or not having used it more was that computers are too expensive, fear of online scams or identity theft, and so far, their smartphones have been adequate to their needs.

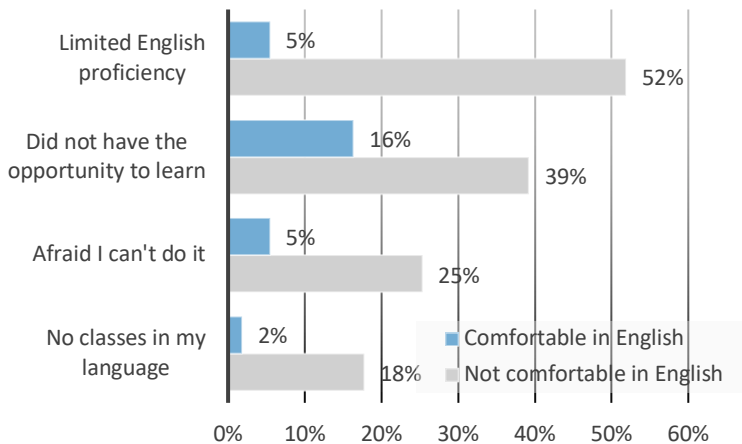
Source: presurvey

Some barriers affected multilingual learners who reported less fluency in English more than others, as shows in Figure 11. Unsurprisingly, the options related to language separated the two groups significantly. Just over half of those who reported less fluency in English indicated that their reason for not using technology (more) was because of their limited English proficiency, reinforcing that sentiment with the last item in Figure 11, lack of classes in their own language.



Two barriers that may be more surprising were: “Did not have the opportunity to learn,” selected by 16% of those comfortable in English and more than twice that percentage of those who reported less fluency. Even more dramatically, those with less English proficiency were five times more likely to select “Afraid I can’t do it,” supporting the comments of interviewees who stress the importance of teaching emotional literacy (El Centro), using respectful communication (KCSKC), or providing a safe and friendly environment for questions (Casa Latina).

**Figure 11. Reasons for not using technology by English fluency**

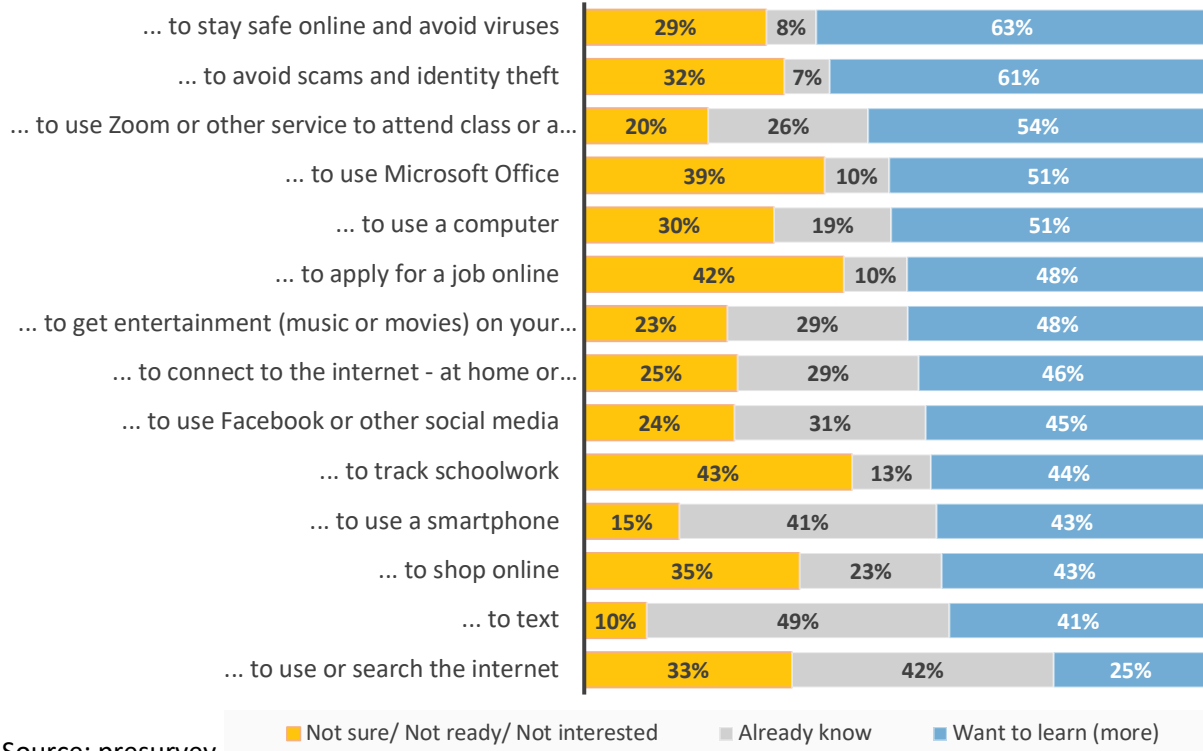


Source: presurvey

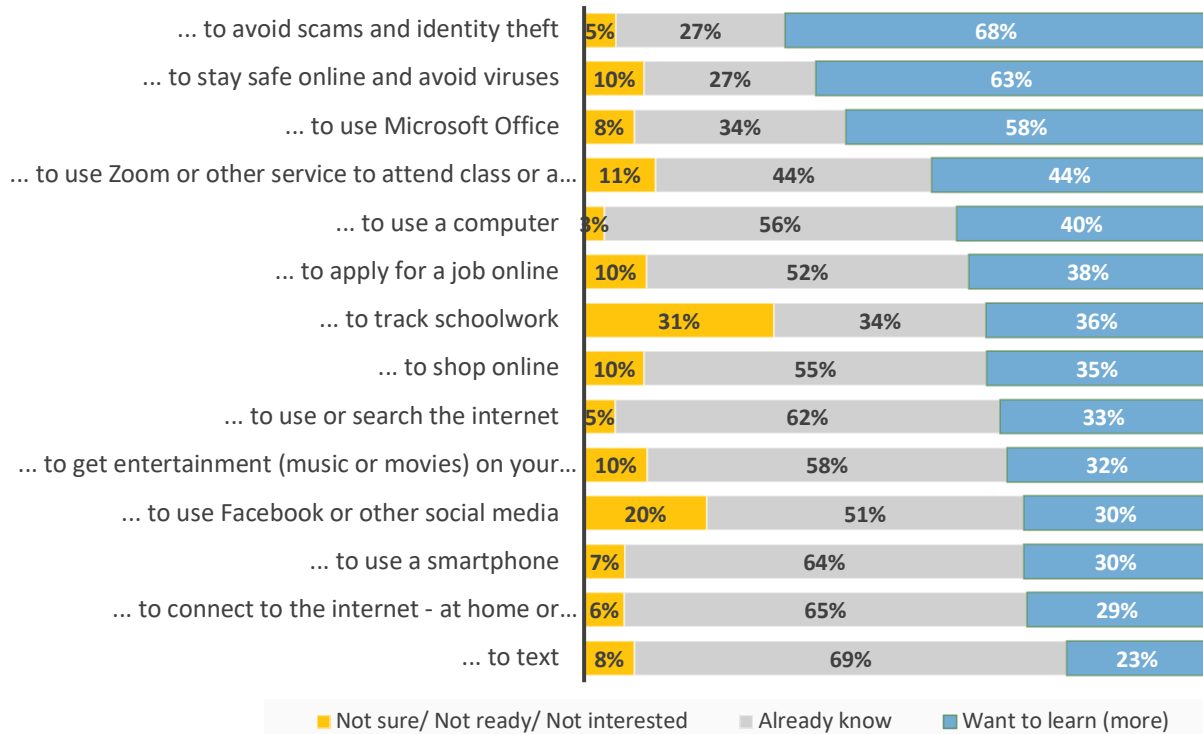
Figure 12 shows the technology skills that multilingual learners who reported less fluency in English want to learn, what they already know, and what they are unsure about/not ready for/or not interested in. Figure 13 shows the same information for those who were more comfortable in English.

The most immediately notable differences between these two figures are: 1) more of those who reported less comfort with English were unsure of what they wanted to learn, or not yet ready to learn it (the inside segment of each bar, light orange); and 2) those with more comfort with English “Already know” more of the skills (middle segment of each bar, light gray). Similarities are described below the figures.

**Figure 12. Respondents with less English fluency want to learn...**



**Figure 13. Respondents with more English fluency wanted to learn...**



The most significant similarities between the two figures are what respondents most want to learn. Regardless of English level, respondents were most interested in online safety, Zoom, Microsoft Office, how to use a computer, and how to apply for a job online.

When interpreting these figures, the outermost segment (blue) reflects the percentage of participants who want/need to learn (or learn more) about that topic. However, the measure of importance for each topic is the combination of the outer segment (blue) and the middle segment (light gray). Together, those segments reflect the percentage of respondents who consider it important enough to learn, whether they have already done so or not. For example, learning to text or to connect to the internet is far down the list of the English speakers. But that is only because so many respondents already know how to do those tasks – about two-thirds of the English-speaking respondents. Together with those who want to learn how to do those tasks, more than 90% of the English speakers feel those skills are important enough to learn, if they don't already know how to do them.

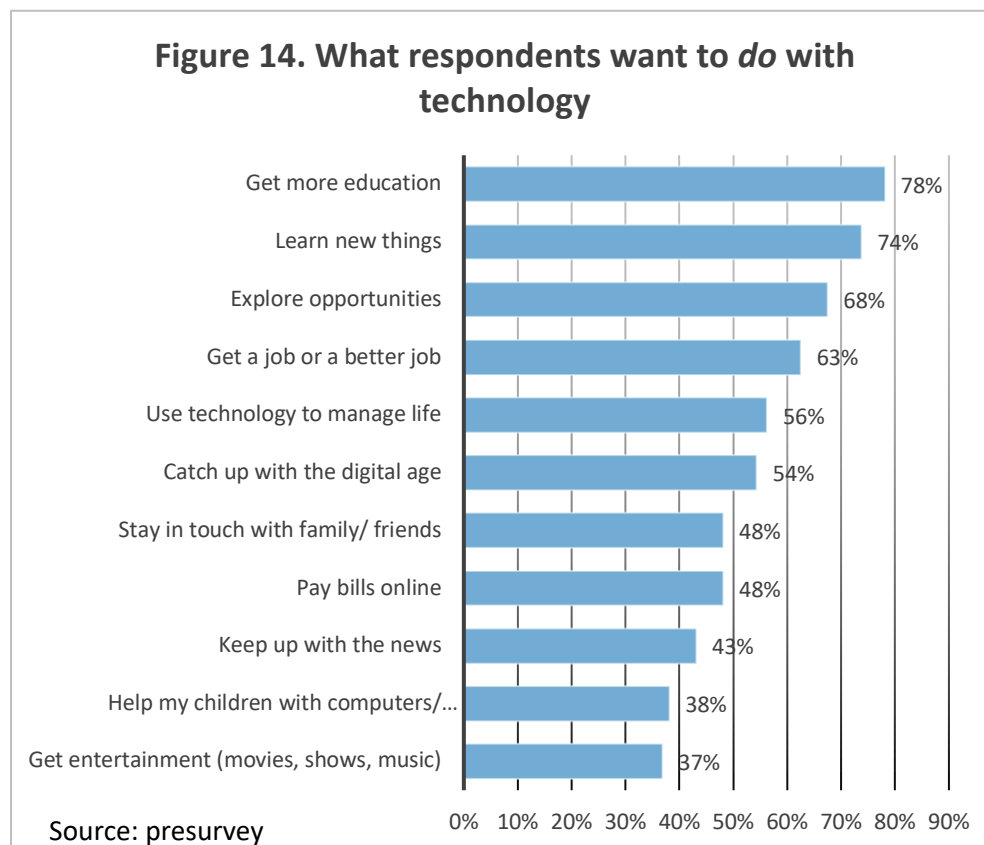


Figure 14 shows how respondents want to use the skills they are interested in learning. Most often, respondents selected options related to improving their circumstances: education, opportunities, and employment, indicating their awareness of the importance of learning about technology to their employment prospects.

Most of these goals were about the same for respondents regardless of level of comfort with English. Two goals differed. Significantly more respondents with limited English noted that they want to use technology to better manage their life (65% vs. 40%) and to catch up with today's society (60% vs. 41%).

# Digital Navigator Program: Describe and Assess Implementations

## Program Types

All partners offered one-on-one digital navigation, though Sound Generations offered one-on-one navigation as the primary method of digital skills training and PSTC offered it as a way to help customers get started when no class was available in their language. Most other organizations offered it as a supplement to other training activities. Seven organizations also offered computer training courses with at least four sessions (El Centro de la Raza, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, PSTC, KCSKC, HOAS, CISC, and Casa Latina). Two primarily relied on self-study (Uplift and World Relief) and two primarily relied on intensive one-on-one instruction (Friendship Circle and Sound Generations). Six used one or more short (about 1.5 hour) workshops, either as their primary method for digital skills training (EACS) or as a supplement to their primary method (Urban League, CISC, Uplift, World Relief, and Friendship Circle).

## Offered courses of at least four sessions

- **El Centro de la Raza (Spanish) October 2022 to June 2023**
  - *Digital Navigator (DN):* an experienced technology teacher.
  - *Class Description:* The DN taught evening online classes in **Spanish**. The course included two-hour classes two nights per week for four weeks (16 hours).
  - *Philosophy:* Teach “emotional literacy” and employ patience, compassion, and kindness in teaching to address participants’ low self-esteem and lack of confidence in ability to learn. Participants frequently praised the DN’s patience.
  - *Integration with other programs:* Career training at El Centro de la Raza.
  - *Curriculum* included:
    - WhatsApp and Zoom;
    - The desktop;
    - Operating systems: how to update Windows or macOS, and installing security software;
    - Inputs: keyboard (including some keyboard shortcuts) and mouse;
    - File Explorer, creating folders, and organizing material;
    - Internet and browsers (introduce ACP);
    - E-mail management: how to clean, organize, and label emails;
    - Navigating bank accounts
  - *Other components:* The DN also created a WhatsApp group with participants, using it to send class material during class and “microlearning” clips between classes. Also recorded class sessions so participants could review, or catch up if they missed a class.
  - *Laptop and ACP:* Qualified participants who completed the course were eligible for a laptop; ACP was introduced in the 6<sup>th</sup> class session (internet and browsers).
  - *Outcomes & impacts:* all survey respondents were satisfied with the program and would recommend it; survey respondents’ skills increased at least half a point (on a four point scale) on the four computer skills initially rated as their least comfortable (working with software, using a portable storage device) and eight internet skills (getting information about their children’s schoolwork, paying bills, online shopping, looking for answers to computer problems; visiting the public library online, finding legal or consumer rights information,

looking for job training, and working from home); 57 of 61 completed the class; 60<sup>5</sup> laptops were distributed; all received ACP information and 20 enrolled. Focus group participants mentioned these impacts:

- increased confidence;
  - strengthened community and communication;
  - improved learning or starting school;
  - increased ability to help their children with computers or with their schoolwork; and
  - ability to catch up or participate more fully
- *Future:* El Centro de la Raza expects to continue offering digital literacy classes.
- **Urban League (English) October 2022 to June 2023**
    - *Digital Navigator (DN):* an experienced teacher of Science Technology Engineering, and Math (STEM).
    - *Class description:* The DN taught the digital literacy course in **English** over five-weeks in the computer lab at the Urban League.
    - *Philosophy:* make the program culturally relevant, welcoming, and let the participants feel Urban League's commitment to advancing the participants.
    - *Integration with other programs:* the Career Bridge at the Urban League.
    - *Curriculum included:*
      - Computer internal and external components;
      - Windows operating system;
      - Basic networking;
      - Web usage; and
      - Digital safety.
    - *Other components:* The DN also offered workshops on using Microsoft Office products and Google account services.
    - Laptop distribution was based on need and eligibility, and not linked to course participation. The need for laptops greatly exceeded the supply.
    - The DN promoted ACP and helped enroll participants.
    - *Outcomes & impacts:* 44 participants received digital skills training; 95 received digital navigation; 77 received devices, 44 received information about ACP and 22 were enrolled. Focus group participants assessed that they gain an average of one-third of the scale of technology knowledge from wherever they started. Participants mentioned these impacts:
      - improved job or job search;
      - increased confidence;
      - strengthened community and communication;
      - improved learning or starting school;
      - technology made their life easier;
      - enabled them to help their children with computers or with their schoolwork;
      - helped them catch up or participate more fully.
    - *Future:* Urban league hired an instructor for the DNP and they hope to continue the robust course offering, if funding allows.

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<sup>5</sup> Some reports of number of outcomes (devices distributed, ACP information or enrollments, number receiving digital navigation or digital skills training) are estimates as some information was not available.

- **PSTC (English class, referral for Spanish class, one-on-one for Spanish, Dari, Arabic, Ukrainian) October 2022 to September 2023**
  - *Digital Navigators (DNs)*: Bilingual case managers (some with a technical background and some with teaching background) served as DNs for speakers of Spanish, Dari, Ukrainian, and Arabic.
  - *Class Description*: For customers with adequate **English** proficiency, PSTC offered computer training programs contextualized for employment and for learning English for beginning and advanced customers prior to the DNP. The PSTC instructor taught the course over a two-week period, five days per week, 3 hours per day. Interested participants enrolled in PSTC's advanced computer training for another 30-hour course.
  - *Philosophy*: Meet the customer where they are and help them get to the next step as quickly as possible. For computer training, this means not requiring them to complete an ESL course before they can use the computer.
  - *Integration with other programs*: the Job Training program at PSTC
  - *Curriculum* of basic computer course included:
    - Customer Service
    - Vocational ESL
    - Introduction to computers
    - Microsoft Word
    - Microsoft Excel
    - Filing procedures
    - Keyboarding
    - Ten-key
    - Navigation of the internet and email
    - Data entry applications
    - Telephone etiquette
  - *Other components*:
    - Spanish speakers with limited English proficiency were referred to El Centro de la Raza and/or provided one-on-one digital navigation by a Spanish-speaking DN.
    - DNs provided a one-on-one introduction to computers for Dari, Arabic, and Ukrainian speakers without adequate English proficiency for the class to get them started with their new laptop.
  - *Laptop and ACP*: Laptops were distributed based on eligibility and need, not linked to training; no more than one per household. The need for laptops was more than double the supply. DNs mentioned ACP but participants showed little interest, preferring to continue with their child's school-provided hotspot.
  - *Outcomes & impacts*: 150 participants received digital navigation; 144 received digital skills training; 118 received information about ACP and 6 received assistance with enrollment; 44 devices were distributed, focus group participants estimated that they gain an average of 16% of the scale of technology knowledge from wherever they started. Focus group and survey participants mentioned that learning technology:
    - increased confidence;
    - strengthened community and communication;
    - enabled use of a translator app;

- helped improve their English;
  - made their life easier;
  - enabled them to help their children with computers or with their schoolwork;
  - opened the world for them; and
  - helped them catch up or participate more fully.
- *Future:* PSTC will continue their computer literacy course as a job training option. Case managers will continue to assist customers if they come in asking for help getting started with technology, but do not expect continued interest without laptops to distribute.
- **KCSKC (Khmer) October 2022 to June 2023**
  - *Digital Navigators (DNs):* Young community members, with a range of technology expertise and without teaching experience. Most were previously involved with KCSKC.
  - *Class Description:* The DNP evolved into two sections of the program each week. For each section, DN provided two hours of technology lessons every week in **Khmer** (divided by operating system: Android or iOS), followed by a traditional Khmer lunch and then games, a physical activity such as dancing or stretching, or a field trip to the park or the grocery store. Transportation was provided as needed. Most elders stayed for the full 6 to 7 months of the program.
  - *Philosophy:* Teaching elders to use technology is important, but just as important is strengthening the foundations of the community to create the bonds of connection within and across generations.
  - *Integration with other programs:* The Elder Tech Class was one component of a program of holistic community health.
  - *Curriculum* included:
    - Finding where the apps are on the phone;
    - Taking pictures;
    - Navigating through the photo album;
    - Adding contacts;
    - Sending texts and photos to specific contacts;
    - Recording videos;
    - Other specific requests addressed as they arose.
  - *Other components:* It was necessary to teach the material step-by-step, very slowly, with repetition, and mindful of tone and language.
  - *Laptop and ACP:* Laptops were found to be too advanced for the elders and a youth program was developed to distribute laptops to eligible community youth. DN helped elders enroll in the Lifeline Assurance Wireless program, as well as ACP.
  - *Outcomes & impacts:* 74 received digital navigation; 93 received digital skills training; 32 received information about ACP and 2 were assisted with enrollment. Focus group participants estimated an improvement in skill that advanced them about 14% along the technology knowledge scale. They mentioned these impacts from participating in the Elder Tech Class:
    - increased confidence;
    - strengthened community and communication, including the other activities, such as lunch and field trips;

- taught them how to use their smartphones for practical needs (e.g., sending a photo of a letter to a case manager for translation, independently seek out needed help, text with others, including in Khmer) and fun (taking and sharing photos and videos);
  - helped them navigate using Maps;
  - relieved anxiety and stress; and
  - helped them access entertainment.
- *Future:* KCSKC will strive to continue to incorporate their Elder Tech Class into their community health programming.
- **HOAS (Afaan Oromo, Amharic) October 2022 to September 2023**
  - *Digital Navigator (DN):* Experience teaching computers; taught in speaker of Afaan Oromo and Amharic.
  - *Class Description:* In person classes taught in **Oromo** and **Amharic** using a combination of lecture with hands-on practice using DNP laptops. Classes were taught two days per week, two hours each.
  - *Philosophy:* Unknown
  - *Integration with other programs:* None, though most participants were jobseekers
  - *Curriculum* included:
    - Configuring a new laptop
    - Introduction to Windows
    - Word processing
    - Spreadsheet processing
    - Email
    - Using the internet
  - *Other components:* Tigrinya-speaking focus group participants emphasized the importance of in-language instruction as several described the challenge of Tigrinya speakers trying to learn about computers from an Amharic speaker, despite the committed efforts of the instructor to overcome the language barrier.
  - *Laptops and ACP:* Laptops were distributed primarily to class participants. ACP was introduced to participants, but focus group participants did not seem aware of ACP and throughout the online focus groups, several participants repeatedly lost their connection and needed to rejoin, suggesting that they may not have been ACP customers.
  - *Outcomes & impacts:* 328 received digital navigation and all of these received ACP information. The DN helped 27 apply for ACP. 78 received digital skills training. Focus group participants had received (or were about to receive) digital skills training. Those who received training estimated that their skill advanced an average of 27% of the scale from where they started. They mentioned that the class:
    - enabled them to help their children with computers or with their schoolwork;
    - enabled them to use email and Excel;
    - enabled them to complete job applications and submit resumes online;
    - strengthened community and communication;
    - helped with English; and
    - helped with school or with learning.
- **CISC (Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese Chinese, in class interpretation as needed) October 2022 to September 2023**



- *Digital Navigators (DNs)*: CISC has a multilingual staff with two trainers/ digital navigators and six to eight bilingual digital navigators.
- *Class Description*: The DNP has allowed CISC to offer consistent in person and online evening computer training and to supplement their current training program with holistic support. The DNP comprises: **Cantonese and Mandarin (other as needed)** digital training (online and in person), digital navigation, device distribution, and ACP outreach. Training depends on the needs of participants.
- *Philosophy*: Meet participants where they are, coaching to use technology independently to “move on and move up,” able to meet their own needs.
- *Integration with other programs*: Specific integration was not described. Interviewees described the DNP as a stand-alone program, which would help participants address their needs independently, without reliance on caseworkers.
- *Curriculum* and language of instruction depended on the needs of participants.
- *Other components*: With youth trained to support and lead the event, they hosted a “Tech Help Day” on using technology to improve basic quality of life with:
  - Google Translate
  - Tech cleaning
  - Virus scanning
  - Internet safety
  - Technology for children’s learning
  - Learning to type
  - The do-not-call registry
- *Laptop and ACP*: Laptops were distributed based on eligibility, need, and prioritized groups: people with school-aged children, jobseekers, younger clients, and learners. (Many elders received iPads through an earlier initiative.) DNs helped participants enroll in ACP.
- *Outcomes & impacts*: 765 received digital navigation; 179 received digital skills training. 423 received ACP information and 123 were enrolled. Most survey respondents (81%) were satisfied with the program and most (79%) would recommend it to others. These participants, who started the DNP assessing themselves between “Not at all” and “Slightly” comfortable with most computer and internet skills, indicated a statistically significant average increase of between 0.2 and 0.6 points on a four-point scale for all skills. Focus group participants estimated a 27% increase in their technology skill and mentioned these impacts of the DNP:
  - increased confidence;
  - strengthened community and communication;
  - supported their learning goals
  - enabled them to help their children with computers or with their schoolwork;
  - helped them learn to use a translator app and connected them with an ESL app;
  - helped them catch up with a digital society;
  - made their lives easier, including accessing immigration information; and
  - helped them access online entertainment.
- *Future*: CISC will strive to continue to offer the digital skills training program. They would like to develop a mobile lab, enabling them to provide training in different locations.
- **Casa Latina (Spanish)** October 2022 to June 2023

- *Digital Navigators (DNs)*: Current staff and volunteers served as instructors supporting participants' use of the NorthStar Digital Literacy Essentials course, translated into Spanish.
- *Class Description*: Ninety-minute classes in **Spanish** (daytime or evening classes) once a week for four weeks (6 hours)
- *Philosophy*: A comfortable, collaborative, friendly in-person class where participants feel safe learning and asking for help is important for learning, especially with participants very new to technology.
- *Integration with other programs*: The DNP integrated well with the Day Workers program but was also offered to others.
- *Curriculum* was based on Northstar Digital Literacy segments that had been translated into Spanish, their Essential Computer Skills:
  - Basic Computer Skills
  - Internet Basics
  - Using Email, and
  - Windows
- *Other components*: Participants aware that El Centro de la Raza offered more advanced instruction in Spanish.
- *Laptops and ACP*: Qualified participants who completed the course and achieved at least 85% on a proctored Northstar assessment received a laptop if needed. Little to no ACP uptake.
- *Outcomes & impacts*: Most computers were distributed by the time of the interview, 105 participants received digital navigation and digital skills training, 36 received ACP information but there was no known uptake. All survey respondents were satisfied with the DNP at Casa Latina and would recommend the program to others. On average, respondents reported at least a half point increase in their comfort performing 11 of 13 computer tasks and five of 15 internet tasks. Focus group participants mentioned these impacts:
  - increased confidence;
  - increased ability to help their children with computers or with their schoolwork; and
  - improved learning or starting school;
  - help with learning English; and
  - ability to catch up or participate more fully.
- *Future*: Casa Latina will return to previous digital literacy efforts, with reduced staffing and the support of devices on loan from the Seattle Public Library.

### **Introductory workshop**

**EACS** (October 2022 to September 2023) hired a full time IT expert to teach three 2-hour introductory classes per week in **Somali**, with up to five participants in each class. In each class, the instructor focused on logging in, creating passwords, connecting to the internet, using email, and Zoom. If participants needed additional help getting started, they could attend a later two-hour session, and/or meet with the Digital Navigator for a one-on-one session. The Digital Navigator also distributed devices (the demand was much greater than the supply), including hotspots, and explained the ACP, a service that became less relevant when they had no more computers to distribute. Focus group participants and survey respondents agreed that the DNP had had a great impact on them by providing a laptop and training. However, although some reported having gained skills using Excel, many others remained uncomfortable with many of the tasks. Curiously, focus

group participants asked for more hotspots and access to smartphones and ways to become more integrated with the larger community.

*Outcomes & impacts:* 165 participants received digital navigation, digital skills training, and ACP information. 54 received assistance in enrolling in ACP. This number is surprising because this focus group stood out as agreeing that even with the discount, since they were not currently eligible to work, they could not afford even the discounted ACP rates. All survey respondents said they were satisfied with the DNP at EACS and would recommend it. They reported an average of nearly a one-point gain on a four-point scale across all computer and internet tasks. The pre- and postsurveys were administered a few hours apart on the same day and responses likely represent participants' enthusiasm for the instruction and their learning more accurately than their actual knowledge gain. Thus, this positive outcome should be taken seriously, but not literally. Focus group participants mentioned:

- strengthened community and communication;
- improved job or job search;
- improved technology skill; and
- improved ability to catch up or participate more fully.

*Future:* The DNP helped EACS understand the importance of improving the digital literacy of their customers, so they are committed to seeking funding to continue the program.

### **One on one**

While all partners offered one-on-one support for DNP participants, for most partners, this was in support of their primary method of digital skills training. Two partners (Sound Generations and Friendship Circle), used one-on-one instruction as their primary method of digital skills training, reflecting the unique needs of their participants, which could be met through one-on-one instruction.

**Friendship Circle** (October 2022 to September 2023) integrated their DNP with their life skills development for employability program for teens and young adults with a wide range of disabilities. Friendship circle staff and their robust group of volunteers worked with members in **English** to help them learn about typing and internet safety, to help them work on Northstar modules and practice using the internet with activities such as finding recipes online. Volunteers often worked one-on-one with members in support of their learning needs. More advanced members were invited to lead exercises to help their peers learn. Interviewees noted that when they encountered difficulty in engaging youth in the lesson plans, they slowed the flow of material and used repetition of material in different contexts. This was seen as the most responsive and effective approach to improving the digital literacy of Friendship Circle members.

*Outcomes & impacts:* 37 participants received devices, 104 received digital navigation, 49 received digital skills training, 86 received information about ACP, and 15 were assisted with ACP enrollment. Focus group participants/interviewees mentioned these impacts:

- increased confidence;
- strengthened community and communication;
- improved learning or starting school;
- improved ability to catch up or participate more fully;

- Improved leadership for those who taught their peers;
- Improved access to entertainment.

*Future:* Friendship Circle recognized digital literacy as both an important skill for members and an important tool that Friendship Circle staff and volunteers can use to support members. They intend to continue supporting the technology use of their members.

**Sound Generations** (October 2022 to September 2023): A volunteer developed and supported Sound Generations’s relationship-based one-on-one digital literacy program prior to the DNP. Digital navigation and skills training are delivered in **English** via appointments (45 to 60 minutes). The grant enabled Sound Generations to increase the number of appointments available and to extend services to their Ballard location. This approach was considered the most effective for Sound Generations’s participants because of their diversity of skill and need. Nearly all participants were college-educated and most already had a device and some digital skills, but with a wide range of knowledge gaps, perhaps as a result of self-learning. The one-on-one appointments usually lasted 45-60 minutes, enabling the DN to listen deeply to the issues brought by the participants to understand and try to close the individual’s knowledge gap. When topics of general interest emerged, the DN would offer a 90-minute workshop, dubbed a “Tech talk” with some lecture, some question and answer, and one-on-one help. Topics might include digital safety and internet security, or finding and streaming entertainment. Sound Generations also created two learning communities, one for iPhone users and the other for Android users.

*Outcomes & impacts:* 33 laptops were distributed; 387 individuals received digital navigation and one-on-one digital skills training (some of them, multiple times); 38 qualified participants were informed about ACP and 12 were given assistance in enrolling. All focus group participants said they would recommend the DNP at Sound Generations, with some comments suggesting that some topics might be better handled with a class or workshop, but for the most part, very satisfied with the intensive one-on-one approach for technical support and skill development. Overall, focus group participants estimated that they advanced 19% up the technology knowledge scale as a result of the DNP. They mentioned these impacts:

- increased confidence;
- strengthened community and communication;
- improved ability to catch up or participate more fully;
- improved use of their devices (Android phone, iPad, Apple watch);
- better organization and management of digital data;
- better ability to navigate and transfer photos;
- improved understanding of the basics, such as the toolbar; and
- ability to stream TV.

*Future:* Sound Generations offered the same model of support for participants, but only at one location and for fewer hours. They expect to at least return to that level of service and are seeking other funding to be able to offer more appointments, as requested.

## Self-study

Overall, self-study was not consistently successful with participants when that was the primary teaching approach.

At **Uplift Northwest** (October 2022 to September 2023), in the face of a demand for laptops that far outstripped the supply, the staff that found themselves assigned to implement the DNP after unexpected leadership turnover decided to distribute laptops to participants most committed to digital literacy, a commitment they could demonstrate by successfully completing the Northstar Digital Literacy program in **English**. They found that while some participants successfully earned a laptop in this way; they also observed that some of those who were successful were already digitally literate. Overall, they concluded that the Northstar system is effective for some of their participants and so should not be abandoned. However, as they neared the end of the grant, they were not on schedule for distributing the laptops. As a result, they initiated short workshops in which they introduced computer basics and Zoom, distributing a laptop to those who attended the workshop. Uplift Northwest plans to build on the successful workshop model for future digital literacy training.

*Outcomes & impacts:* Limited information was available. 601 individuals received digital navigation and digital skills training; 1000 were exposed to information about ACP and 11 were assisted in enrolling in it. Interviewees indicated that all laptops would be distributed by the end of the program; all new Uplift members were given information about ACP and no information was available about ACP uptake. Focus group participants mentioned these impacts:

- increased confidence;
- improved learning or starting school; one person stated, “it launched me.”
- technology has made their lives easier.

*Future:* Uplift Northwest noted the importance of these skills and the devices to their members. Interviewees voiced a commitment to maintaining the Northstar option, and building on the workshops, preferably with grant funding, but if necessary, perhaps from operating funds.

**World Relief** (October 2022 to September 2023) received a large donation of laptops (mostly Chromebooks) just prior to the DNP grant, for a total of about 400 devices. World Relief had been working toward a digital literacy program prior to receiving this grant, but it had not been getting traction, at least in part because it lacked a stable Digital Navigator (DN) to lead it. The DNP supported a DN with an IT background to lead and establish the program. Integrated with World Relief’s ESL program, the focus of the technology access was to enable customers (speakers of at least 17 different languages) to attend World Relief’s ESL courses online, reasoning that participants’ initial focus should be to learn English, which would make everything else easier to learn, including digital literacy. The DN delivered at least 250 laptops to ESL participants and in some cases, helped get them set up for ESL classes, with an internet connection (including help applying for the ACP) and enough of an introduction to use Zoom to attend an online ESL class.

At the beginning of the DNP, perhaps before being asked to distribute and, if necessary, install 250 laptops, the DN offered a small digital literacy workshop which he said had been effective. When the demands of device distribution slow and if the language barriers can be addressed, similar workshops may meet the unmistakable demands of focus group participants for digital literacy classes. Though

focus group participants reported an increase in their ability to use their laptop, most felt that their ability applied only to their ability to function within the World Relief system, not outside it.

*Outcomes & impacts:* At least 250 devices were distributed (some from a donation by InterConnection). 326 received digital navigation; 82 received digital skills training. 306 were given information about ACP and 7 were assisted with enrollment. An early successful workshop was offered, but, perhaps due to the significant task of distributing such a large number of computers, the workshops were discontinued in favor of helping participants connect with the internet via ACP when possible and then connect with ESL classes at World Relief. Focus group participants noted a strong need for instruction in how to use their device, but some said that at least when it comes to using technology to navigate within World Relief, their skills had advanced 24% along the technology knowledge scale. They also indicated these impacts:

- increased ability to help their children with computers or with their schoolwork;
- strengthened community and communication;
- improved English skills; and
- technology has made their lives easier, with things such as immigration procedures.

*Future:* World Relief recognized the importance of these skills and intends to continue providing devices and helping install them, preparing participants for ESL classes. They will seek separate funding to be able to provide this service, but if necessary, will use non-designated funds to do so.

See Table 2 for a summary of program descriptions.

Table 2. Summary of program features

	El Centro de la Raza	Urban League	PSTC	KCSKC	HOAS	CISC	Casa Latina	EACS	Uplift	World Relief	Friendship Circle	Sound Generations
Integrated with	Career	Career	Career	Health		Independence			Career	ESL	Career	
Computer classes (# hours)	Online 2X/week, 4 weeks	5 wks <i>in lab</i>	<i>In lab</i> : Beg. (30 hr) Adv: (30 hr)	1 day/week, 6 mos	2 days/wk; 2 hrs/day	In person <i>in lab</i> or online	Northstar in class 4 wks (6 hrs) w/SPL loaners;					
One-on-one: as needed for most; intensive for some			If no Eng. or Span., one-on-one intro in Dari, Ukrainian, Arabic			To understand needs and refer				Laptop delivery; some set up	To accommodate members' special learning needs	Most training through intensive one-on-ones
Workshops (incl: MS Office, digital safety, basics)		Regular, MS Office				One time "Tech help day"		Primary method: Basics to get started	Evolved from self-study to Zoom 101	One workshop early	For comm. members w new laptops: workshop intro & Northstar option	Non-urgent, general interest
Self-study									Northstar	Independent		
Language of classes offered (and where language barriers persist)	Spanish	English	English (one-on-one for others)	Khmer	Afaan Oromo Amharic	Any Chinese, others as needed	Spanish	Somali	English	Multiple	English	English
Other			To El Centro for Spanish	Community focus; seniors			To El Centro for more Spanish instruction		Zoom 101 effective; Northstar OK for some			

## Barriers to gaining technology skills

**No accessible teacher:** Review of the methods used in Digital Navigator Programs suggests that teaching and learning is most effective when the learners are able to learn from a teacher (in a language they understand). The different teaching approaches (in person or online classes, short workshops, or intensive one-on-one sessions) seemed most suited to specific circumstances. For example, a group of learners at roughly the same skill level, might best learn in a class or workshop. If the participants have some stability, they may be able to return for a series of classes. When learners possess idiosyncratic bodies of knowledge or idiosyncratic learning needs, intensive one-on-one sessions, or possibly short stand-alone workshops may be most effective. Some learners can progress through self-study but may need the support of a teacher to overcome learning barriers when they pop up. Learning was most difficult for participants who did not have someone to turn to, to help them start or keep going.

**Language of instruction:** Analysis showed that English proficiency was the most powerful predictor of technology knowledge in this project. Participants who were unable to access technology instruction in a language they could understand clearly expressed the need for accessible instruction; one person said he had a Mac that he just carried around but was unable to use. Participants may have a computer and internet access, but without a way to get started (and then learn more), they are unable to progress.

**Lack of technology access:** Even though having a working computer at home is far less powerful a predictor than language spoken at home, those with a home computer consistently rated themselves as significantly (and meaningfully – about a half a point on a four-point scale) more comfortable with various technology tasks. *Evaluator's note:* a home computer provides an opportunity to learn through practice, experimentation, and trial and error. Time on public access computers is often limited.

**Low income:** Income was a strong predictor of having a home computer and the type of internet access. Specifically, people with low income were less likely to have a home computer and either no home internet access or internet access only through their phone data plan. People with low income were less likely to have a paid plan. Interestingly, those who described internet access through the shelter or through their housing were among the most comfortable with technology tasks.

Some focus group participants explained that until they are able to work, even the low rate charged through the ACP is too much for their budgets. Survey respondents named from \$0 per month to \$100 per month as an affordable amount for home internet access, averaging \$23, with a median of \$10 per month.

ACP was not uniformly explained or accepted. Digital Navigators did not have a uniform understanding of the program or requirements for participation.

**Learning difficulties:** Some survey respondents indicated that they had had learning difficulties in school, potentially related to learning disabilities. Focus group participants and interviewees described memory and learning challenges among their customers, sometimes due to age and sometimes due to circumstances, such as having lived through trauma or other sources of stress.



**Psychological or emotional challenges:** A quarter of participants who do not speak English at home indicated a fear that they might not be able to learn to use a computer, a fear that itself can interfere with learning and that some of the DNs discussed and addressed.

## Feedback to the WDC

The most consistent comment about working with the WDC was how supportive, flexible, and responsive the staff was.

Another common theme for six partners was that the demand for laptops far exceeded the supply. The exceptions were World Relief, which had just received a large donation of laptops and Chromebooks, Sound Generations, KCSKC, and Friendship Circle. Casa Latina and El Centro de la Raza might have needed more laptops, but they restricted eligibility by making course completion a requirement, possibly obscuring the unmet demand.

Five partners found the monthly Zoom calls to be helpful. Some interviewees appreciated the material and information provided while others expressed their appreciation for connecting with other digital navigators. One digital navigator remarked that the session they attended about a Seattle-wide strategy was at the wrong level for them. Interviewees from two organizations noted that the kind of support they needed had more to do with questions their organizations needed to answer than help the WDC could offer.

Only a few people remarked on in person meetings – a summit for one, a roundtable for another, and an ACP information session for a third – and all were very positive about those experiences, underscoring the value of interaction among the DNs.

Overall, interviewees were extremely satisfied being part of the DNP and all said they would be eager to participate again if the opportunity were available. The main concerns voiced were associated with the fast startup and short period for the project. Some were surprised by how time-consuming it was to get a new program up and running. Others were surprised by how time-consuming it was to check, install, and deliver the laptops. When helping participants enroll in the ACP was added to the process, the time requirements expanded dramatically.

Two interviewees, both serving large numbers of participants, noted that the reporting requirements were too onerous. Perhaps an early conversation could have revealed this challenge and requirements could have been modified for a large group. Three interviewees voiced concerns about their challenges with the evaluation surveys. An online survey may be too difficult for new computer users as they are just beginning the class.

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### Interviewee (paraphrase)

Partnering with the WDC was positive. Everyone I met was really nice and it was a great experience—joyful even sometimes to work with them!

Attitude and posture of support was really helpful for a good partnership.

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## Recommendations and suggestions

Interviewees and participants were asked for suggestions for improvement.

- Several interviewees would have liked more opportunity to interact with other DNs, possibly through in person meetings or breakout rooms in Zoom. DNs wanted to learn from each other and possibly solve problems together. *Evaluator's note:* all interviewees who mentioned this suggestion mentioned in person meetings. It could also be useful to provide an asynchronous online forum where members can ask questions and share resources, ideas, successes, and challenges between meetings.
  - One interviewee suggested providing a handout on how each partner was implementing their DNP.
  - One interviewee remarked that it is difficult to manage participant expectations, specifically, letting them know that they will not be experts at the end of a short digital literacy course. They will need more training before they can expect to get a job based on their computer skills. It might have been helpful to discuss this issue with colleagues.
  - One interviewee discussed the challenge of teaching a course with participants at different skill levels, another topic where other DNs might have been able to help.
  - One DN had creative ways of engaging participants between classes (a WhatsApp group through which he sent microlearning video clips). This innovative nugget might have been useful for other DNs, especially where participants tended to forget between classes.
- Some also asked for a broader survey of available and affordable resources. For example, what courses can participants take through the Seattle Public Library (SPL) or other public agencies? Casa Latina had developed a partnership with SPL where the library lent laptops and hotspots for a several-month period, giving Casa Latina a computer lab for classes. CISC worked with SPL to provide an English language app for interested participants. Information about these and other available resources might have been helpful for DNs whose students want to continue learning. Consider documenting these resources in a handout as well as the webpage. Continue to update the handout, adding and subtracting resources as they change, and as new participant interests emerge.
- Some asked for professional development for DNs, such as:
  - a variety of training courses to develop their skills which would prepare them to improve the services they offer (some were eager to organize courses in participants' languages);
  - how to break complex material into smaller pieces to create a step-by-step series of lessons that build and deepen understanding over time.
  - how DNs can communicate their DN work experience so it will be meaningful across industries for their future careers
- Some asked for more guidance on how to implement a DNP. For some, that meant getting a checklist of topics to include in an introductory course or for getting individual newcomers started, for others it meant getting more information about the goals and parameters of the program: what might a DNP look like?

- **ACP:** Interviewees found the ACP to be confusing to them and customers alike, a problem that was exacerbated by language barriers. They suggested creating short explanatory videos in multiple languages so that potential customers (and DNs) can fully understand the program and make an informed decision as to its suitability for their situation. Also, because the application process was so time-consuming, and because applicants sometimes got stuck in the middle of an application, some DNs did not have time to enroll all eligible participants. If possible, simplify the application process, especially on the questions where applicants discontinue the process.
- Organizations serving individuals with disabilities suggested making assistive technology available, including devices with touchscreens.
- Participants in all programs asked for the program to continue, and expand if possible.
  - Some asked for more advanced classes (or a referral to another resource for more advanced training);
  - Some asked for more basic, step-by-step classes;
  - Some asked for more meeting times per week to overcome forgetting between classes.
- Participants suggested that when using the Northstar Digital Learning system, support the job search unit and the information literacy unit with in-person workshops.
- Some participants requested specific workshop topics:
  - Making better use of a smartphone; introduction to Lifeline Assurance Wireless for qualified households
  - Using technology to collaborate in the workplace (e.g., group texts)
  - Technology troubleshooting
  - Marketable computer skills
  - Typing practice
  - Participants who are not fluent in English would like help:
    - knowing how to follow voice call instructions;
    - knowing how to use translator apps;
    - knowing how to qualify for a smartphone so they can have internet service outside the house.

*Evaluator's notes:*

- Implement one-on-one engagement with community partners and navigators to enhance dissemination of the Digital Equity Asset Map. Furthermore, it is essential to maintain regular updates to the resource and consistently promote it, highlighting its value, especially as new providers enter the scene and others adjust their services. These proactive measures will help maximize the impact of the Digital Equity Asset Map and ensure its accessibility to all who can benefit from it.
- Instructors aware of participants who were afraid they could not learn relied on compassion, emotional literacy, and patient repetition to help participants overcome the anxiety that itself can present a learning barrier. Other barriers, such as memory challenges due to stress, trauma, age, or even disability were addressed similarly. Some of the strategies used to combat stereotype threat (where students perform below their ability because of fear that they might confirm a negative stereotype about a group they belong to) might be usefully adapted

by digital navigators. Here is one resource: <https://ctl.wustl.edu/resources/reducing-stereotype-threat/>

- Ensure that partners and their low-income customers are aware of the availability of low-cost refurbished laptops and hotspots from a trusted source in the community.
- Provide learning resources in all needed languages, updating as people from new language groups migrate to the U.S. Include English names for computer components and tasks as well to make it easier for participants who transition into an English-language technology class.
  - Work with partners to develop quick start cheat sheet with a common curriculum to introduce new users to computers and the internet and that new DNs can build on. Participants were especially interested in learning how to stay safe online. Consider a picture-based document with bilingual instruction as a guide to:
    - different parts of a computer,
    - the desktop,
    - the operating system,
    - file explorer,
    - introduction to software applications (how to install, open and use them; how to learn more about them)
    - the internet and browsers (how to conduct a Google search, how to evaluate information, how to search for and apply for jobs online),
    - digital safety (avoiding viruses, identifying scams, preventing identity theft, how to be safe with online financial transactions),
    - email (including sending and opening attachments, and email etiquette),
    - Zoom,
    - how to use navigation apps
    - how to find translated pages when they are available, and how to use translator apps,
    - how to continue learning (e.g., the University of YouTube and other resources).

Some other topics that came up frequently were using Microsoft Office (the most frequently requested topic after digital safety), typing skills, photos and photo editing, and business-related technology skills, such as web page creation and making flyers.

- Include pictures and screenshots to help new technology users learn.
- Translate this into all needed languages and make them widely available.
- Consider recruiting community members as volunteers to help their neighbors get started. Just over a quarter of focus group participants said they'd like to be able to share their new knowledge of technology skills with others. Friendship Circle, Casa Latina, and Sound Generations all mentioned successful reliance on volunteers. Consider creating a "technology club," where participants who complete a course can help each other answer questions and support newcomers as they arrive. This could also help meet a need expressed by immigrant participants to be more engaged in the community.
- Consider helping stakeholders stay engaged and keep learning. Invite stakeholders (partners, DN, customers and others) to sign up to receive (or send) occasional tech tips or updates, such as "how to change your background in Zoom," or "How to send money using your cell phone," or "Goodwill is starting another digital literacy course" or "This YouTube video is good for getting started with Microsoft Office..."

- Provide professional development for digital navigators. In addition to curriculum suggestions and the topics listed above by DNs, consider a workshop on how to recognize possible learning disabilities or other learning difficulties, and ideas for how to address them.
- Data collection
  - Intake form – discuss its use with each organization.
    - Make sure the implementer understands the intention of each question. Importantly, participants should understand that the questions are diagnostic; participants are not being judged.
    - If possible, take a sample of the data from each organization after a week or two to ensure they are being filled out properly.
  - Provide a different form to collect information about services delivered.
  - Evaluation surveys
    - Encourage participation from all partners.
    - Spanish translations were extremely useful. Provide these early.
    - Shorten the surveys. Organizations that were successful in providing most of the data sacrificed class time to do it.
    - Consider a paper version, at least for the presurvey. The online version was difficult for beginning computer users.
    - Translate thoughtfully. Some of the translations were not used at all.

# Appendix I – Partner Organization Summaries

## El Centro de la Raza Summary

This report is based on:

- Two simultaneous focus groups over Zoom with 9 participants and two Spanish-speaking facilitators;
- Pre-surveys with 50 respondents, 21 of whom also completed a post-survey<sup>6</sup>;
- An interview with the Digital Navigator;
- WDC Intake data provided for 62 participants, 50 of whom also completed a survey;
- El Centro de la Raza’s final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through June 2023.

El Centro de la Raza used the Digital Navigator Program (DNP) to focus on students with no technology skills who may also need a laptop, including those who may have barriers preventing them from participating in other training opportunities, such as a language barrier or a lack of needed documentation. Most of the recruitment was through word of mouth and other programs at El Centro.

Training was offered to five cohorts with 12 participants each. Each cohort received eight 2-hour class sessions, twice a week for four weeks, plus 30 minutes before or after each class and on Wednesdays for one-on-one sessions. All courses were taught via Zoom (recorded and posted) with supplementary material provided during each class through participants’ phones using WhatsApp. The instructor also sent “microlearning” exercises in video clips to students between classes to reinforce their learning.

Each class focused on one of eight topics: 1) WhatsApp and Zoom; 2) The desktop; 3) Operating systems: how to update Windows or macOS, and installing security software; 4) Inputs: keyboard (including some keyboard shortcuts) and mouse; 5) File Explorer, creating folders, and organizing material; 6) Internet and browsers; 7) E-mail management: how to clean, organize, and label emails; 8) Navigating bank accounts where the instructor included material from El Centro’s finance class. When possible, he included lessons on productivity software and a general recap of materials covered. He also included Notepad and WordPad since they are included with the operating system. El Centro also offers an intermediate level class.

Devices were distributed at the end of each course, based on good attendance, participation, and course completion. However, some were distributed during the class to those without a home computer.

Three-fourths of participants were women and nearly all were Latinx with all but one saying they speak Spanish at home. However, about half reported some comfort with English, but only two were “Very comfortable” with English. Ages ranged from 24 to 62, with an average of 42. Most (82%) had at least a high school diploma. Half (54%) had no more than a high school diploma and the others (28%) had at least some college.

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<sup>6</sup> Some confusion led to 15 people taking the post-survey in place of the pre-survey. Corresponding data were transferred from the post-survey dataset to the pre-survey dataset.

Nearly all (84%) participants indicated that they had low income, and almost as many (79%) reported a language barrier. This interviewee also observed an additional barrier: many participants exhibited low self-esteem and lacked confidence in their ability to learn, sometimes along with difficulty focusing. This led to the commitment to teach with patience and compassion, and incorporate “emotional literacy” into the curriculum.

Almost two-thirds of participants had a working computer at home when they completed the WDC’s intake form and all but 10% had internet access, through a paid internet plan (66%) – though only 5% through the ACP – their child’s school-provided hotspot (13%), or their phone data plan (11%). The instructor provided a hotspot to those who needed one. Half of the survey respondents indicated that they had enough technology at home for their family. At the time of the survey (after the 6<sup>th</sup> class), 14% said they had a hotspot and 19% said they had enrolled in the ACP. Only one third said their internet service did not fall short in any way. When asked what an affordable monthly cost for internet access would be, participants gave an average of \$39 per month.

When asked about other places to access technology, all agreed that few if any other places offered digital skills training in Spanish. Several mentioned that they had relied on family or coworkers for technology help, but they always felt like a burden and too often, their children were neither patient nor skilled as teachers.

Survey respondents were asked about barriers around using technology (or using it more). Almost three-fourths identified a language barrier, followed by a lack of opportunity to learn (46%) and about one-third each named fear of scams or identity theft, the cost of computers and fear of not being able to learn. Supported by the DNP, El Centro de la Raza addressed these barriers by providing Spanish-language instruction, including a section about online safety, and distributing laptops as needed. The instructor was particularly sensitive to participants’ fear of not being able to succeed.

Participants enrolled in the DNP with 35% at most indicating that they were “Very comfortable” with any of the computer tasks; indeed, the high mark of 35% was given to comfort using a smartphone. Only 7% said they were comfortable using a computer when they enrolled in the DNP.

When asked what they wanted to learn, internet safety and Microsoft Office topped the list with three-fourths saying they wanted to learn more about those skills. Between 55% and 65% wanted to learn (more) about using Zoom, tracking schoolwork, the basics of computer use and applying for a job online.

When asked what they wanted to be able to do with technology, respondents selected many options, most often catch up with the digital age (90%) and explore opportunities (80%). Three fourths wanted to be able to stay in touch with families and friends, and almost as many (70% each) wanted to get more education, and use technology to manage life, like paying bills online.

Nearly all (97%) of those who enrolled in the DNP at El Centro graduated from the class. The instructor estimated that he distributed 40 laptops. In the 6<sup>th</sup> class, the instructor introduced the ACP as part of his lesson and about 20% enrolled. Fewer (13%) received a hotspot.

All survey respondents agreed that they would recommend the DNP at El Centro to others, and 78% said they “Strongly agreed” that they would do so. Overall, respondents appreciated the program and

felt that it helped them get started with computers. They seemed less sure about the next steps for continuing to learn. When asked why they did or did not recommend the program, respondents expressed the importance of gaining technology skills, with many emphasizing their appreciation of the instructor and his methods.

It is difficult to assess skill gain because the presurvey was administered so late in the program, after so much learning had already taken place, to judge by responses to the brief intake survey. However, significant gains were detected in the areas of using software, such as installing and opening software, editing and saving a document, and using a portable storage device. By the 6<sup>th</sup> lesson, participants had already become, on average, at least “Somewhat comfortable” with the keyboard (navigating with arrow keys, using a mouse), logging on, opening a browser, and using email. Participants also gained skills in many internet tasks, including paying bills, visiting the library online, finding legal or consumer rights information, looking for job training, and working from home.

According to the comments of focus group participants, the instructor was successful in his primary goal: to help participants overcome their fear so they could approach computer issues with confidence born of knowledge.

When asked for suggestions for improving the program, participants were eager to continue learning, ideally by extending the current course to add new content and reinforce old content.

Some suggested adding more weeks or another day each week, especially for beginners.

The most important recommendation from the evaluator is to continue to offer as much of the program as available funding allows, seeking additional funding when the opportunity arises.

## Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle Summary

This report will focus on the Digital Navigator Program at the Urban League, based on:

- A focus group featuring mutual interviewing with 12 participants;
- Presurveys with 29 respondents;
- A written response to interview questions by the Digital Navigator;
- WDC Intake data provided for 103 participants, 28 of whom also completed a presurvey;
- Urban League’s final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through June 2023.

The Digital Navigator Program (DNP) at the Urban League was integrated into the organization’s career bridge program and was important when preparing participants for job development sessions. It included a five-week computer training course in the Urban League’s computer lab, one-on-one digital navigation and technical support, information about and help enrolling in the ACP, and the distribution of laptops and hotspots.

The curriculum included: computer components; the Windows operating system; basic networking; using the internet; and digital safety. It also included workshops on Microsoft Office and Google account services. Classes were taught through lectures supported by PowerPoint and worksheets, followed by hands-on practice sessions. The instructor used the ability to project his screen, to enable



participants also to learn by observation and he made class materials available on a cloud drive. This instructor's methods incorporated all participant-preferred learning modalities.

Participants served were racially diverse with an overrepresentation of Black/ African American and American Indian/ Alaska Native/ Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander participants relative to King County's population distribution. Most participants (86%) spoke English at home, but seven additional languages were represented among program participants with Somali the next most prevalent at 6%. Several who named other languages also spoke English at home. Nearly all had completed high school and just over 60% had gone on to college, with nearly a quarter earning a degree or a professional certificate.

The WDC intake data showed that nearly all participants had low income and many (41%) were in unstable housing. Two in ten had a disability and almost as many were involved with the justice system. Many of these participants were likely to be jobseekers as well – six in ten according to the evaluation survey, but that category seems to have been omitted from the intake form for the Urban League.

Fourteen percent of the participants had a working computer at home when they enrolled in the DNP, but nearly all had a smartphone. Just over 60% had home internet access through a paid internet plan (36%), 7% had internet access through the ACP or a phone data plan (28%). Three in ten had no home internet access. Many of those with home internet access indicated that it was too expensive for their budgets (\$15 per month was the average rate participants would find affordable), too slow, not enough bandwidth, and inconsistent. Only a quarter of those with internet access said that it worked well and only 10% said that they had enough technology at home for everyone in their family.

The most commonly selected reasons for not using technology before (or not using it more) were the cost of computers and the internet, followed by not knowing how to get started and a concern about scams and viruses. The DNP at the Urban League was designed to address these issues directly. When asked what had changed so they were ready to tackle technology now, respondents most often indicated personal readiness and the availability of resources, followed by needing the skills for employment and to function in today's society.

About six in ten participants were "Very comfortable" using a smartphone and checking and responding to email, but fewer than half were as comfortable using a computer and even fewer were as comfortable working on their resume. About half were "Very comfortable" using Zoom and looking for or applying for a job online. Participants were most eager to learn to use Microsoft Office, followed closely by staying safe online, using Zoom, and the basics of computers and the internet. The most common reasons for wanting to learn these things were to get more education and a job or a better job, and just to learn more things and explore opportunities.

When asked why they didn't make more use of other public access computing options, respondents mentioned a transportation barrier and concern about security and privacy at public access locations.

The final report to the WDC included 95 customers served overall. Almost half received digital Digital Skills Training and information about ACP, and half of those were enrolled in the ACP. About three-fourths received a device, though more were needed for qualified participants. Focus group participants were asked to rate their technology skill when they started with the DNP and at the time

of the focus groups on a scale from 0 to 10. On average, participants rated their initial skill at 2.7 rising to 6.1 by the time of the focus group, gaining one-third of the scale. Participants said they had more confidence using computer and the internet, and they agreed that their new skills helped with school or learning, job search, feeling more secure about digital safety, being able to physically navigate in a new city, and staying in touch with friends and family. Participants noted that they expected these skills to help them get better quality jobs, access information more easily, and just keep up with society.

Participants and interviewees suggested making the classes longer. Participants also suggested eliminating the age restriction and adding review sessions.

## Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC) Summary

This report is based on:

- A focus group featuring mutual interviewing with 12 participants;
- Presurveys with 7 respondents;
- An interview with the program manager;
- Written responses to the interview protocol by four Digital Navigators;
- WDC Intake data provided for 130 participants;
- PSTC's final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through September 2023.

The Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC) provides job training and employment services to immigrants and refugees, as well as other community members. Prior to the Digital Navigation Program (DNP), PSTC offered a robust and intensive computer training program taught in English and contextualized for English language learners in the workplace. Spanish speakers without sufficient English language skills to benefit from PSTC's computer training program were referred to El Centro de la Raza to participate in their online computer training course in Spanish.

The DNP added the distribution of laptops and hotspots to their existing program and formalized the role of bilingual case managers as Digital Navigators (DNs). The DNs worked one-on-one with customers who spoke neither English nor Spanish to help them get started using their new laptops.

An important guiding principle of the DNP at PSTC is to meet the customer where they are and help them get to the next step as quickly as possible. For computer training, this means not requiring them to complete an ESL course before they can use the computer.

PSTC serves an ethnically and racially diverse population, primarily immigrants and refugees from around the world. All PSTC participants were noted as having low income and most as having a language barrier. Most were seeking employment and were behind in technology. Half the participants had completed no more than a high school education – and almost half of these had less than that. About a quarter had a four-year college degree. In addition to these barriers to learning how to use their new computers, a few of their customers were in unstable housing and others required considerable patience and repetition due to memory problems, possibly due to age or due to trauma.

Corresponding to the interviewees' assessment that participants were behind in technology, only 5% had a working computer at home when they began with the DNP, though 87% had home internet

access, through their phone data plan (57%), a paid internet plan (16%), or their child's school-supplied hotspot (14%). Only 2% had their internet service through ACP and 13% had no home internet access. Only between 15% and 25% were "Very comfortable" performing any of the computer or internet tasks, though 45% reported being "Very comfortable" using a smartphone.

The few participants who completed the survey indicated that their reasons for not using computers (very much) in the past were: they hadn't needed to (or their smartphone had served their needs); there was too much to learn; or the barriers of language and computer cost. They were ready to learn, though, because they needed it for job search and for school. Participants indicated wanting to use their computer skills for education, employment, learning English, general learning, catching up to society, making life easier, keeping in touch with friends and relatives, and helping their children.

Virtually all participants received Digital Navigation and digital skills training. About one-third received a laptop, and about three-fourths received information about ACP, though interviewees remarked that to their surprise, most participants declined to participate in ACP, sometimes opting instead to use the hotspot supplied by their child's school, even though they would not have access to it over the summer. Interviewees speculated that participants may not have understood the ACP.

Most focus group participants indicated that their computer skills had advanced during their DNP participation, gaining an estimated average of 16% of the scale used. They explained that the gain in skills had given them some confidence and improved their employment opportunities. Several commented that it made their lives easier, helped them stay in touch with family in their home countries, and generally "opened the world" to them. Some used the technology to improve their English; and some learned to use it as a translator.

When asked for suggestions for improvement:

- Interviewees first mentioned more laptops to distribute. They reported that the allocated laptops were able to meet about 40% of the need of their customers.
- They also wished for computer training courses in more languages, voicing a willingness to refer participants to other organizations for computer training in their own languages.
- They suggested a series of short videos in multiple languages explaining the ACP so participants with limited English skills might better understand the program (and to help DNs themselves understand it better.)
- More support for DNs to advance their own skills and to improve services they offer – even just a checklist or template of topics they should cover when helping a participant new to computers.
- *Evaluator's note:* the WDC's Digital Equity Asset Map may fill some of the gaps in services identified by interviewees: <https://www.seakingwdc.org/digital-equity-asset-map> .

## Khmer Community of Seattle King County (KCSKC) Summary

This report is based on:

- A modified focus group with 20 participants, 4 facilitators, and 4 interpreters;
- A group interview with four KCSKC Digital Navigators;
- An interview with the co-Executive Director of KCSKC;

- KCSKC's final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through June 2023.

Digital Navigator Program (DNP) at KCSKC evolved into a holistic program designed around the technology and other needs of community elders. The program started as a drop-in program where elders could receive a laptop and hotspot, and get one-on-one help with technology. But they soon recognized that the laptops were too advanced for the elders though they did have a pressing need to learn more about their smartphones since those are needed to access basic and emergency services. In response, they created the Elder Tech Class with a curriculum around smartphone use and a focus on the use of the camera.

The Digital Navigators (DNs), young Khmer community members mostly educated in a western tradition and not teachers by training, created their own curriculum, borrowing from other sources, such as the Northstar Digital Literacy program. It covered: taking pictures (including finding the app on the phone and navigating through photos); adding contacts; sending texts and photos; recording videos; and other requests as needed. A DN met with each participant enrolling in the DNP to assess their technology need and help them enroll in the appropriate program (Lifeline Assurance Wireless Plan for a smartphone and/or ACP).

Because of the program's popularity, they split the growing group of more than 50 participants into two sections with about half attending on Tuesdays and the others on Thursdays, providing transportation as needed. The technology portion of each day ran from 11 am to 1 pm, with one-on-one troubleshooting before and after class. Following class, the group enjoyed a traditional Khmer meal, followed by a physical activity such as dancing or stretching, or a field trip.

Participants were 50 to 84 years old, primarily but not exclusively women. Interviewees explained that as refugees, participants immigrated to the U.S. as trauma survivors after years of war and torture. Most or all spoke Khmer at home and few if any were comfortable using English. Most (90%) could read Khmer but might not be able to write it. All had low incomes. Many elders found it difficult to remember what they had been taught from one week to the next, consistent with research on the lasting effects of trauma. Lack of literacy also produced a teaching and learning challenge.

Interviewees were keenly aware of the elders' background and focused on delivering a culturally relevant and trauma-informed program by working in the Khmer language with interpreters and teaching step-by-step, very slowly, remaining mindful of tone and language. DN's explained that recognizing the limitations of "mind memory," they relied on muscle memory and repetition. Both the DN's and the elders needed to stretch their expectations. The DN's needed to stretch away from their western understanding of teaching toward the expectations of the elders in a way perceived as respectful, while the elders too needed to stretch to accommodate instruction that was different from what they expected.

No other accessible community resources were known to the participants or to the interviewees. Both the transportation and language barriers would prevent most elders from receiving technology support outside the Khmer community. If those barriers were overcome, participants said that other classes were too fast and they are afraid to ask questions. Though younger family members can be a helpful resource, they may not have the skills or patience needed.

DNs estimated that 80% of the elders had smartphones; the others had flip phones. DNs worked with the flip phone owners to apply for smartphones through the Lifeline Assurance Wireless plan. Participants enrolled in the DNP not even knowing how to use the basic functions on their phones including the volume buttons. One participant said it was stressful whenever they tried to use the phone before. Further, they explained that the needs of these elders went beyond simply learning to use technology; they also needed help receiving and filling out paperwork, learning how to navigate the world of services, including physical navigation and directions, and “adjusting to life in the U.S. in general.” Interviewees explained that the hot meals, the field trips, and the dance and stretch activities served as rewards to keep the elders coming back and struggling through the process of learning to use their phones, and they helped to create a sense of belonging and community.

In confirmation, focus group participants frequently spoke about their isolation and the value of the DNP not only for helping them with technology, but also helping them become part of a community where they could belong.

DNs worked with elders to apply for smartphones and/or ACP. At the time of the interviews, they were distributing hotspots to those who needed them and they had planned to distribute laptops to qualified youth, along with workshops on digital safety, software, resume-building and other skills.

Focus group participants estimated that over the course of the program they gained 14% on the skill scale. Twenty percent said that when they enrolled in the DNP, they did not know anything and none considered themselves to be expert. By the time of the focus group, all had moved out of the first category and 37% had moved into the expert category.

Focus group participants explained that they were happy with the program because it brought people together to form a community while they learned some important skills, and they want more of both.

Interviewees identified several avenues of impact, including:

- It encouraged elders to get out of the house and strengthen community.
- It empowered them and allowed them to address challenges for themselves and seek help via their phones.

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**Focus group participants** (paraphrased and interpreted)

- Before the program it was very frustrating.
  - I felt that having a phone was useless before the program started.
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**Focus group participants** (paraphrased and interpreted)

- It feels like they can't live without their device now.
  - I love the group. We've been isolated for so long. Coming here, we are able to connect with other elders and communicate with others and use a smartphone.... We want to continue longer to keep building skills.
  - We are happy to be in class, we come and learn; We want to continue, learn to text message!
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- It relieved anxiety and stress.
- In addition to gaining digital skills, they benefited by getting access to phones, internet, exercise, food, and community.
- The Khmer keyboards downloaded to the elders' phones encouraged some to participate in Khmer language classes.

Participants reported a “Large improvement” in their social interactions and their mood or happiness. They said they now feel “Very confident” in using technology and they want to learn more. When asked how much their lives had changed because of the DNP, 55% said “A large change” and the other said “A little change.”

All informants wanted the program to continue; DNs wanted more preparation and participants wanted more outdoor activities and for English to be integrated into the technology lessons. They also wanted more frequent classes – to help with memory – and with all participants together – for community.

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**Interviewee comments** (paraphrase)

The program increased the confidence of the elders by showing them that they were able to learn new skills.

This program was so valuable for the elders. The program was an opportunity not just for digital education, but also community building, holistic support and growth. Elders were always so happy to see each other and have community in-person. They were able to share together and were more joyful, hopeful, energetic, and not as trapped and isolated.

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## Horn of Africa Services (HOAS) Summary

This report is based on:

- Findings from three focus groups;
- Written interview with project coordinator/instructor;
- WDC Intake data including 119 HOAS participants;
- HOAS's final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through September 2023.

Horn of Africa Services (HOAS) provides services to low-income immigrants and refugees from diverse East African countries through multi-lingual and multicultural services designed to support the adjustment of participants to life in the Puget Sound area.

As part of the Digital Navigator Program (DNP), HOAS offered digital literacy classes to 78 customers in Amharic and Oromo, something the speakers of these languages appreciated deeply. They also offered classes to Tigrinya speakers, though not in Tigrinya. Comments in the focus group indicated that classes were offered twice a week and covered material that enabled participants to use email and Excel, and to complete job applications and submit resumes online.

Most of the participants were women (79%) and all were African American/ Black. They spoke at home: Somali (35%); Tigrinya (28%); Amharic (26%); and Oromo (11%). About four in ten HOAS participants did not have as much as a high school education and half of these reported no formal schooling. At the other end, about one-third had at least some college. Gender differences in education emerged with men having more education. Nearly all participants (94%) indicated having low income and 70% reported a language barrier.

None of the participants reported having a working computer at home when they enrolled in the DNP. However, nearly all had access to the internet at home, mostly through their phone data plan (67%), about a quarter through a paid internet plan (23%), and a few (8%) through their child's school-provided hotspot. Two percent reported no internet access. None of the participants indicated access via ACP when they enrolled in the DNP, though some said they paid discounted fees and many of those that did reported having poor and inconsistent service, frequently dropping off the online group. The final report indicated that 27 customers received assistance in applying for ACP during the DNP.

When asked what they want to accomplish through using technology, the goals mentioned included: finding a job or job training or opening a small business; learning or education; helping children or managing family life; or independent use of technology (not having to ask family members for help).

Focus group participants were uniformly positive in their assessment of and gratitude for the computing classes they attended at HOAS, particularly those that were taught in their native language (Oromo and Amharic). They noted how much easier it was to learn a foreign topic in their own language. In contrast, the Tigrinya speakers struggled to learn from a course taught in Amharic, despite the significant efforts of the instructor. Some participants in each group said they had received or expected to receive a laptop. They said they were learning to use email, apply for a job, download content from the internet, and use Microsoft Office.

When asked to rate their computer skill at the beginning of the program and at the time of the focus group on a 1 to 10 scale, participants described themselves as “just starting out” with computers. Those who had attended a class indicated an average increase of 2.7 points, gaining an average of about a quarter of the scale. The Oromo group was especially pleased that the course was taught in Oromo and that English terms were also used, explaining that it was helping with English.

Participant suggestions:

- Continue offering the computer classes, including an advanced class.
- Offer more days of class to help address their tendency to forget lessons between classes.
- Provide material in advance for each lesson.
- Provide instruction in Tigrinya
- Start with the basics before tackling productivity software

## Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC) Summary

This report is based on:

- An in person focus group with 18 participants, conducted by four CISC staff;
- Pre and post combination surveys with 74 participants;
- Interview with the Digital Navigator Program Manager;
- Intake data provided for 523 participants, 45 of whom also completed a survey;
- CISC’s final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through September 2023.

CISC described the DNP as an important preview of a bigger project that needs to be done. This program gave CISC staff the opportunity to work with community to identify needs and develop creative approaches to addressing them.

CISC used the Digital Navigator Program (DNP) to supplement their existing digital teaching curriculum with innovative holistic support, including training, one-on-one support, provision of a laptop, and enrollment in ACP for low-cost internet access. The DNP has given CISC a way to expand their digital program beyond just training. They are now able to meet participants where they are, going beyond large general trainings to individual training and support to help them navigate through online resources for everyday needs, such as paying for Medicaid or Medicare and other bill payments. This has provided more motivation for community members to engage with the program.

CISC has a multilingual staff with two trainers/ digital navigators and six to eight bilingual digital navigators. CISC’s DNP comprises four main elements: digital training (online and in person), digital navigation, device distribution, and ACP outreach.

Customers presented diverse learning barriers, addressed creatively by CISC staff. For example, language barriers are significant for CISC customers, and the languages themselves are varied. The language for each class was selected depending on the language of participants. Sometimes the issue of multiple languages was addressed by dividing the class into two or three language groups, sometimes through simultaneous interpretation, and if necessary, through one-on-one support.



Device distribution was based on individual need and priorities determined by CISC. Priorities were: people with school-aged children, jobseekers, younger clients, and learners.

Two-thirds of the DNP participants were women and most spoke Chinese Cantonese (72%) or Chinese Mandarin (27%) at home. Three-fourths were “not very comfortable” or “not at all comfortable” speaking English. Nearly half of the participants who disclosed their formal education indicated having had less than a high school education, and about a third of these had had no formal education at all.

Nearly all participants (86%) had low incomes, two-thirds had a language barrier (something that came up as a barrier to using other resources for technology access, such as the public library), and 44% were seniors.

Just over a quarter of participants reported having a working computer at home and three quarters had an internet service plan, 28% through ACP. Another 13% had internet access through their phone data plan. Ten percent had no internet access at home. When asked about other resources for technology access, more than half (58%) mentioned friends and family. However many respondents were reluctant to call on friends and family for help, not wanting to bother them. About a quarter mentioned the public library.

No more than 5% indicated that they were “Very comfortable” with any of the computer or internet tasks queried in the WDC intake survey, including using a smartphone or computer, using email, working on their resume or looking for an applying for jobs online, or using Zoom. Between 57% and 93% indicated that they were “Not at all comfortable” performing these tasks.

The survey, administered during Digital Skills Training classes, showed that participants recalled themselves as being more comfortable when they begin, with the percentage rating themselves as “Very comfortable” ranging from 4% (using a portable storage device) to 12% (using a mouse and using email). Mostly, participants were “not at all comfortable,” especially when it came to using editing software.

The top five (or so) topics participants wanted to learn about were: staying safe online; getting entertainment; using (and learning to connect to) the internet; using Zoom; using their smartphone (including texting); and using Facebook.

In the postsurvey, the percentage with computers at home increased from 33% to 46%; the percentage with home internet access increased from 87% to 97% and the percentage with internet access through ACP doubled from 17% to 34%.

Overall, participants were satisfied with the DNP at CISC with 86% agreeing (or strongly agreeing) that they got the help they needed, were satisfied with the program (81%), and would recommend the program (79%).

According to the final WDC report, 179 customers received digital skills training. On average, presurvey respondents rated their comfort level between “not at all” and “slightly comfortable on 27 of the 28 computer and internet tasks (and between “slightly” and “somewhat” comfortable on one). By the postsurvey this changed as participants’ skill level increased significantly for all the tasks. For

18 of those tasks the average rating bumped up into the next category, between “slightly” and “somewhat” comfortable.

Focus group participants described access to technology as a quality-of-life issue related to both physical and mental health. They noted that without technology, life would be both less interesting and more difficult. Specifically, it would be more difficult to: accomplish important everyday tasks such as paying bills and using self-checkout at the supermarket; stay in communication with others; remain informed; communicate with the children’s teachers; access medical reports and information; keep up with changing times; and independently access needed services. Survey respondents and focus group participants specifically mentioned the benefits of being connected with ACP, providing their household with higher quality internet access at a lower cost.

At the organizational level, the DNP showed CISC the benefits of adding an individualized approach to their digital navigation, leading more efficiently to independence for customers. This approach integrated well with CISC’s goal as an agency, described as “to bridge the gap and help people move on and move up.”

CISC plans to seek funding to continue offering practical training including online vocational ESL and certifications for work and other purposes. CISC plans to create a mobile computer lab to enable them to provide training at different locations around King County and in partnership with other organizations, noting the growing role of technology in more jobs, thus the importance of technology when preparing the community for the future.

Participants suggested that CISC maintain the current program and add some topics that are important for daily life, such as how to follow voice call instructions, how to check or reply to email, how to use different translation apps, how to add more money to an Orca card. They also asked to be connected to a service that provides free smartphones so they could maintain their internet access outside the house.

The most important recommendation from the evaluator is to continue to offer as much of the program as funding allows, seeking additional funding when the opportunity arises. Consider also referring participants to the Lifeline Assurance Wireless plan for access to free smartphones and service for qualified applicants.

## Casa Latina Summary

This report is based on:

- An in person focus group with 10 participants and four interviewers;
- Pre-surveys with 36 participants, 14 of whom also completed a post-survey;
- Interviews with the Digital Navigator and Program Manager;
- Intake data provided for 45 participants, 15 of whom also completed a survey;
- Casa Latina’s final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through June 2023.

Casa Latina used the Digital Navigator Program (DNP) to expand the technology program they had initiated the year before using loaner laptops from the Seattle Public Library (SPL) and the Spanish language version of the Northstar self-paced Digital Literacy platform in a supportive class setting.

They used the opportunity to add a second weekly 1.5-hour class after working hours and more support staff (two or three staff or volunteers) to increase the number of successful participants per class; distribute hotspots for connectivity at home; and offer laptops as incentives for program completion (6 hours of instruction and 85% on test of basic computer skills). Staff were also available for one-on-one appointments.

Even though the Northstar platform was designed to support independent learning, interviewees explained that a classroom setting with the option of individualized support in Spanish was important, especially for participants very new to, and possibly intimidated by, technology. Participants were also referred to El Centro de la Raza for additional online lessons taught in Spanish by an experienced instructor.

About half (53%) Casa Latina participants were women and nearly all (98%) reported being Latinx and speaking Spanish at home. Sixty-two percent indicated some comfort with English but almost none said they were “Very comfortable.” Participants’ ages ranged from 22 to 68, with an average of 47. Just over half had no more than a high school education – and half of those had not completed high school. Slightly fewer than half had some postsecondary education. Most participants (82%) received their education in another country.

Nearly all participants (91%) reported having low income and more than a quarter said they had unstable housing. Six in ten reported a language barrier, something that came up repeatedly as interfering with earlier efforts to learn to use technology.

Ten percent of Casa Latina participants had a working computer at home when they enrolled in the DNP. Most (73%) had access to the internet at home, through a paid internet plan (31%), a phone data plan (42%), or their child’s school-provided hotspot (4%), but 27% had no home access, about a fourth of these because they had no home.

Some participants were also able to access technology at the public library (40%) or at friends’ and relatives’ homes (20%), but lack of computer knowledge, a language barrier, not having the time to make the trip, and for some, not knowing where to access computers discouraged use of these locations.

The most common reason given for not using technology or not using it more was that computers are too expensive, followed by the language barrier, not having had the opportunity to learn, and concern about digital safety. Supported by the DNP, Casa Latina addressed these barriers by distributing laptops and providing instruction in Spanish. They also ensured that participants were aware of the Spanish language DNP at El Centro de la Raza. Participants reported that their need to catch up with technology pushed them to learn more about technology, along with the opportunity to do so.

One quarter of the survey respondents said they were “new to technology” when they started with the DNP, and three fourths said they were “a beginner” with computers, though almost two thirds indicated that they used a smartphone. Most (80%) of the postsurvey respondents said they had received a laptop and half had received a hotspot. Ten percent were enrolled in ACP and 70% had attended a basic technology class at Casa Latina. Interviewees explained that although they distributed information about the ACP, it wasn’t promoted robustly because it didn’t seem like a good fit for Casa Latina customers.

All participants said they were satisfied with the program, would recommend it, and had learned what they hoped to learn. When asked why they would recommend the program, they noted the growing importance of technology in modern life, and the importance of being able to learn in a patient environment, using a language they are comfortable with.

More survey respondents had a home computer and home internet access at the time of the postsurvey. Some had received DNP hotspots, and a few had enrolled in ACP.

When comparing self-assessed computer and internet skills at the beginning and the end of the program, the average rating for all computer skills increased from pre- to post, reaching statistical significance when it came to installing and opening software, the skills with the lowest average ratings in the presurvey. The gains in skill averaged at more than half a point on a four-point scale, a substantial increase. The gain in internet skills was neither as large (less than half a point) nor as consistent as with the computer skills, nor did any reach statistical significance.

Participants and interviewees both noted that after participating in the DNP, Casa Latina members:

- had more confidence,
- were more able to
  - engage in learning, including English and accessing tutoring programs,
  - support their children's education,
  - keep in touch with family and friends,
  - access needed information themselves, and
  - generally, participate in a digital society to perform daily tasks with greater ease.

Participants remained eager to continue learning, especially about digital safety and more about Microsoft Office. During the DNP, Casa Latina staff and volunteers had provided their 105 customers with 493 hours of digital skills training. Following the DNP, Casa Latina has returned to their partnership with SPL, borrowing laptops from them to help participants through the Spanish version of the basic Northstar curriculum with the support of one staff member and at least one volunteer per class.

When asked for recommendations, participants suggested more frequent classes, both more advanced and more basic (for some, a step-by-step class), and including a typing class. Participants would like to see an ongoing class to enable them to keep up with technology.

Thus, the most important recommendation from the evaluator is to continue to offer as much of the program as available funding allows, seeking additional funding when the opportunity arises.

Consider encouraging students to explore the Google suite of productivity software (included in Northstar modules and available to anyone with a Google account). It does not require a software license purchase and has much of the same functionality as the applications in Microsoft's Office Suite. Take a second look at the requirements for ACP as Casa Latina customers would benefit from low-cost, high-quality internet service and though the enrollment process may be complicated the documentation requirements are not as demanding as initially believed.

## East African Community Services (EACS) Summary

This report is based on:

- An in person focus group with 9 participants, a co-facilitator, and an interpreter;
- Pre-surveys with 17 participants, 13 of whom also completed a post-survey;
- A brief Interview with the Digital Navigator early in the program and another interview with the Program Manager after program completion;
- WDC Intake data provided for 184 participants, 11 of whom also completed a survey.

EACS used the Digital Navigator Program (DNP) to hire a full time IT expert to teach three 2-hour introductory classes per week, with up to five participants in each class. In each class, the instructor focused on logging in, creating passwords, connecting to the internet, using email, and Zoom. In addition to classes, the instructor offered one-on-one assistance. If participants needed additional help getting started, they could repeat the two-hour session, and/or meet with the Digital Navigator for a one-on-one session. The Digital Navigator also distributed devices, including hotspots, and explained the ACP.

During the intake process, participants indicated the type of help they needed: devices; connectivity services; or training. Among those who indicated that they needed devices, they were distributed on a first come, first served basis among the participants who met the income qualifications.

EACS participants were primarily men (81%), and nearly all reported being Black or African American. Most (93%) speak Somali at home, and a few speak Amharic, Oromo, Swahili, or Tigrinya.

Just over half of EACS DNP participants had less than a high school education and half of those had no formal education. Of the other half, 15% had attended some college, most of these earning a two or four-year degree, in another country.

Most participants were not employed but wanted to work. Focus group participants explained that they did not yet have work authorization. All participants indicated having low income and unstable housing. Nearly all indicated that they were involved with the justice system, perhaps related to immigration, and nearly all indicated that they had a language barrier.

None of the participants had a working computer at home at the time of enrollment in the DNP and 30% had internet access via a paid plan (14%) or their phone data plan (16%). Only 2 people said they had their internet through ACP. Seven in ten had no home internet access. A few survey respondents knew they could go to the library for technology access, but most indicated that they would borrow access from a friend's or relative's house instead. Many did not even know about other resources. Focus group participants were slightly more aware of options for access, mentioning resources they can use at the Seattle Housing Authority, but the language barrier interfered as they reported that they didn't even know how to ask to use the technology center.

When survey participants were asked what prevented them from using computers (or using them more), the most common reason was the cost of computers, followed by never having had the opportunity to learn. Supported by the DNP, EACS addressed both barriers by distributing laptops and hotspots, and providing instruction.

Almost half of the DNP participants indicated that they were “Very comfortable” using a smartphone when they enrolled with the DNP, but many fewer were comfortable with any other computer or internet tasks. Specifically, fewer than 10% said they were “Very comfortable” using a computer at all, using email, working on a resume, looking for or applying for jobs online, or using Zoom.

When asked what they wanted to learn, survey respondents were interested in learning most things. At the top of the list was how to stay safe online, how to apply for a job online, how to use a computer, and how to use Zoom, all selected by more than 80% of survey respondents.

The top reasons for wanting to use technology were: to get more education (75%), to get a job or a better job (63%); to stay in touch with family and friends (56%).

All survey respondents “Strongly agreed” that they were satisfied with the program and would recommend it to others.

EACS served 165 customers, providing 330 customer-hours of instruction, including information about ACP (and help enrolling in ACP for 54 of them). EACS distributed 42 laptops and 11 hotspots. The organization had far more demand for devices than they had devices to meet the demand, but an interviewee mentioned that having these devices to distribute was an effective way to introduce the program and encourage enrollment.

Focus group respondents emphasized that they needed more hotspots – some indicated that getting a hotspot was the best thing about the program. They were aware of the ACP, but since they were not yet able to work (lacking work authorization), even the reduced amount charged by the ACP placed too much strain on their budgets.

Survey respondents indicated that since receiving their computers, their skills with technology had increased especially in getting health or medical information, attending an online class, and visiting the public library online. They showed the smallest gains in banking and paying bills online.

Focus group participants and survey respondents agreed that the DNP had had a great impact on them by providing a laptop and training. One person remarked that when she first arrived, she didn’t know how to turn the laptop on, but by the time of the focus group, she was able to use Excel.

At the organizational level, this program raised their awareness of the need for this service, which has become a high priority for the organization. They are actively seeing funding to continue the program.

Focus group participants asked for additional training, a smartphone program and plan, and more hotspots.

Evaluator’s notes: The focus group and surveys revealed a significant gap in technology in the community. The DNP, especially the devices and the training, has answered a significant need in the community, a need that continues after the funding for the DNP has ended. Seek ways to continue the program.

Consider becoming familiar with and promoting the resources mapped through the DNP and other digital equity programs to find other sources of technology support for customers. For example,

participants called for help in obtaining smartphones and indeed, smartphone uptake was relatively low in this group compared with other DNP participant groups.

The links below may lead to needed resources:

Digital Equity Asset Map at the WDC: <https://www.seekingwdc.org/digital-equity-asset-map>

Seattle IT Department: <https://techtalk.seattle.gov/2022/10/04/online-resources-for-seattle-residents/>

Lifeline program for free smartphones to low income households: <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/programs-and-initiatives/apple-health-medicaid/lifeline-phone-services#who-is-eligible>

## Friendship Circle Summary

This report is based on:

- Written comments from three Friendship Circle personnel;
- Focus group/program observation at Sunday Circle;
- WDC Intake data including 19 Friendship Circle participants and 36 other community members who qualified for services;
- Friendship Circle's final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through September 2023.

Friendship Circle of Washington serves individuals with a wide range of disabilities. One program focuses on social and adult life skill development for employability for teens and young adults. The Digital Navigator Program (DNP) at Friendship Circle was incorporated into this program, adding technical navigation for beginning computer users, supported by staff members and youth volunteers.

Friendship Circle staff also worked with local schools to invite qualified families to Friendship Circle to pick up laptops, and if needed, get some digital skills training and information about ACP. Both in groups and one-on-one, staff offered help applying for ACP, as well as setting up and navigating their new devices, including logging in, setting up an email account, and using online platforms like Zoom. Additionally, they offered free digital literacy training through the Northstar Digital Literacy platform.

In addition, staff and volunteers worked with their members in the Life Skills program to support learning about typing and internet safety, work on Northstar modules, and practice using the internet with activities such as finding recipes online. The DNP also provided a basis for members to learn job search skills such as resume building and the use of tools for online job searching. Further, more advanced Friendship Circle members led some exercises and helped their peers learn new skills, something mentioned in the focus group as one of the "good things" about the program.

Both Friendship Circle members and community members appeared in WDC's intake database. About half (53%) of Friendship Circle members were male as were 39% of the community members.

The racial and ethnic distribution of Friendship Circle members reflects the distribution of the larger Mercer Island community with about two-thirds White participants, all speaking English at home. The community members were more diverse with about one-third White, and 36% Black/ African American. Half the community members spoke English at home and the other half spoke Somali, Spanish, Arabic, Tigrinya, and Amharic. Most of both groups were teens or young adults. Half of the

Friendship Circle members and almost two-thirds of the community members had not yet completed high school.

Friendship Circle members all indicated having a disability and about three fourths indicated having low income and being young adults. Just over half of the community members also indicated having low income, just under half said they were young adults, between a quarter and a third of both groups received Medicaid. Just over a quarter of the community members indicated a language barrier.

At enrollment, a quarter of Friendship Circle members had a working computer at home as did 42% of community members. Most of both groups had internet access at home, about three-fourths through a paid internet plan (6% of these through the ACP) and about 10% through their phone's data. Ten percent of the community members and 21% of Friendship Circle members had no home internet.

About one-third of Friendship Circle members indicated that they were "Very comfortable" using a computer or a smartphone, using email, and working on their resumes. Fewer (7%) were as comfortable using Zoom and none were "Very comfortable" with an online job search. About half the community members were "Very comfortable" using a computer, email, and Zoom while about 30% were "Very comfortable" using a smartphone, working on their resume, or job searching online.

Interviewees reported a promising practice: they recounted some difficulty in engaging some of the youth in some of the lesson plans. In response, staff slowed the flow of material and repeated concepts throughout the program in the context of different tasks or needs.

Friendships Circle distributed 37 laptops (16 to Friendship Circle members), ACP information was provided to three-fourths of participants. Almost half of participants received digital skills training, and two thirds of Friendship Circle members received digital navigation, as did 31% of the community members. Focus group participants indicated that they liked using the computers at Friendship Circle, mentioned that they liked looking up recipes and finding and playing games. They said that the DNP helped them with school or getting ready for work, and with communicating with family and friends. Some indicated that they wanted to be able to use technology to help other students. They also identified more that they wanted to learn related to technology.

Interviewees noted that the DNP made daily tasks easier for members, increased their confidence and independence, improving their quality of life, empowered them to work together, and built social skills and reduced isolation. They also noted that program staff and volunteers had learned to use the devices as assistive technology to help them communicate with some of their nonverbal participants.

Interviewees intend to continue and expand the DNP, and encouraged the inclusion of more universally designed technology (such as a touchscreen) for future Digital Navigator Programs.

## Sound Generations Summary

This report is based on:

- A focus group featuring mutual interviewing with 13 participants;
- Presurveys with 21 respondents;
- An interview with the Digital Navigator;



- WDC Intake data provided for 78 participants, 7 of whom also completed a presurvey;
- Sound Generations's monthly report submitted to the WDC;
- Final report submitted to the WDC by Sound Generations including services from October 2022 through September 2023.

Sound Generations is a senior center located in West Seattle with a branch in Ballard. The Digital Navigator Program (DNP) at Sound Generations was described as primarily an appointment-based program with one-on-one or two-on-one sessions between participants and the Digital Navigator (DN) or a volunteer. The DN also offered regular 90-minute workshops (30 minutes of lecture; 60 minutes of question and answer and one-on-one help), dubbed "Tech Talks," attended by up to 25 participants, and separate learning community groups for Android and iPhone users. This program had been developed as a volunteer-run service during COVID-19 and though inefficient in some ways, seen as the best way to address the diverse and sometimes very individualized needs of the participants. The DNP funding allowed the program to expand from two to five days per week, as well as offer services in their other location in Ballard. The program attracted frequent Sound Generations visitors and brought in new participants, resulting in steadily increasing traffic through the DNP. The DNP at Sound Generations is an active and growing program that attracts new people each month, but also a useful resource as indicated by the number of community members that return for additional support.

Interviewees and participants alike explained that the key to the program's success is its inherent flexibility and ability to address the diverse needs the ability of the DN or volunteers to listen deeply, carefully, and respectfully to apprehend the misunderstanding at the root of the question, and then work to help the customer understand the basic issue, guiding and supporting them on their "technology journey."

The typical participant was a well-educated (96% college), senior (94%), White (80%) woman (68%) who speaks English at home. A quarter of these participants have low income, and some (16%) reported a disability.

Three-fourths of participants have a working computer at home and even more (93%) have internet access, 78% through a paid internet plan (4% through ACP) and 16% through their phone's data plan. Seven percent have no home internet access. Survey respondents identified a few barriers to technology, the first being fear of scams and identity theft, followed by the cost of computers and the internet. A one-time visiting group of senior Vietnamese immigrants also completed the presurvey. They identified a different set of barriers, namely a language barrier, the cost of a computer, and the fear that they would be unable to master the device, also a concern for Sound Generations's frequent visitors. The Vietnamese respondents were ready to tackle technology now that they had access to a device and accessible classes on how to use it. The frequent users noted that to participate in society, they must use technology.

Two-thirds of Sound Generations participants were "Very comfortable" sending and receiving email when they started with the DNP, but fewer (20%-30% ) were as comfortable using a computer or smartphone, or using Zoom.

The skills all survey respondents valued were using a smartphone, using a computer, and digital safety. Some indicated that they already knew what they needed to know, but between one-third and

two-thirds wanted to learn more – with participants most often wanting to learn more about smartphones. Mostly, participants wanted to use technology catch up with the digital age, but almost three-fourths wanted to get more education and access entertainment. The DN told of a customer diagnosed with a terminal illness who told him that she was able to find more enjoyment in the time she had left because he had helped her learn how to stream music and movies keeping them accessible to her as her condition progressed.

All participants reported receiving Digital Navigation, nearly all (99%) received Digital Skills Training, some (21%) received information about ACP and 12% received a laptop. The DN explained that most participants already had their own devices; they just lacked knowledge to make the most of it.

When asked what other resources are available to get the help available through the DNP, some mentioned commercial providers (such as Apple support or Best Buy) but noted that those have a fee and they don't teach; only solve problems. Some mentioned the library or friends and family, but opportunities for learning are limited from those sources.

Using a scale from 0 to 8, focus group participants assessed their knowledge at an average of 3.6 when they began with the DNP, and an average of 5.0 at the time of the focus group, reflecting an increase of 19% of the scale. This improvement in skill has allowed many to communicate more easily with friends and family. Some mentioned that they especially appreciate Zoom for this and other reasons. Nearly all said the DNP has enabled them to participate in a digital society, such as paying bills online or getting information or just signing up for things. A quarter mentioned help with hardware support or when their account had been hacked. Other mentioned the help they received with hardware that needed fixing, or help they received in thinking through when to purchase a new device and what device to choose. Several mentioned better organization, better password management, or just the ability to use more apps. One person commented that she now has a common vocabulary with her grandchildren. The DN pointed out the importance of digital competency for accessing critical services.

The suggestions from participants included: continue the program, maybe with more appointments available. Some suggested video tutorials for commonly asked questions might be helpful and some suggested information by video or on paper for newcomers about how the DNP works at Sound Generations. The instructor would like more help to allow him time to think more logistically about the program and he suggested creating a triage approach to appointment requests, so he could identify more urgent needs.

*Evaluator's note:* it may be helpful to create supplementary learning materials, such as how-to videos for common tasks or written materials with graphics and pictures showing or reminding participants how to perform common tasks.

## Uplift Northwest Summary

This report is based on:

- A focus group with 4 participants;
- Presurveys with 14 respondents;
- Interview with the Digital Navigator and Program Manager;

- WDC Intake data provided for 454 participants, 11 of whom also completed a presurvey;

Uplift Northwest is a temporary staffing agency that also provides job training and job readiness services. Though Uplift Northwest staff had offered technology support in the past through two-hour per week drop-in sessions, the DNP provided the opportunity to try a more formal approach.

This organization made their allocated laptops and hotspots available to individuals who completed the Northstar Digital Literacy 15 segment learning system. When they found that many who started the Northstar process did not complete it and as a result, they were behind in their distribution of devices, they developed a Zoom 101 in-person workshop which included an introduction to computers and an opportunity for hands-on practice with one-on-one support. Participants received a laptop at the end of the workshop, with a hotspot if needed.

Interviewees reported that about 1000 people may visit the computer lab on any day, but they regularly interact with only about 200 people. They described participants as mostly having low incomes, estimating that about 40% are homeless. The survey revealed that more than one-third of respondents indicated having had learning difficulties in school, pointing to the possibility of undiagnosed learning disabilities or other conditions that may interfere with successful education.

About four participants in ten had a working computer at home when they began in the Digital Navigator program (DNP), and more than 80% had internet access, though more than half of this was through their phones' data plans. Of the 38% with a paid internet plan, about half said they were enrolled with the ACP. However, interviewees noted that ACP is not a feasible option for those who do not have stable housing. Fourteen percent of participants had no internet access.

Reasons for not having used technology in the past varied. Most often, survey respondents noted that there may be too much to learn, especially about staying safe online, and they hadn't known how to get started. However, they were also aware that the world is becoming increasingly dependent on technology and if they don't join the digital world, they may be left behind, not even able to order a meal or clock in to a job. Though several mentioned the availability of library computers when their smartphones are not adequate to a task, they also observed that that process is cumbersome. Survey respondents noted concerns about the privacy and security of public access computers.

**Focus group participant (paraphrase)**

We've got to get in the game because we've got to feed ourselves. If I don't get that certification, I'm going to be left behind. Everything is changing in CNC.

This program launched me – I did the computer literacy program and now I'm going to a science and technology school.

I'm part of the digital age now! I want to be able to clock in with technology. If I'm looking for a job – it's online. Without my own computer, it's just too far to go to be able to use one. Now I can look up my credit score – I took a budgeting class. Online websites – I never knew where they were! ... it's moving so fast now... It's cool that Uplift is helping me keep up.

Between about half and three-fourths of respondents indicated that they were “Very comfortable” performing a wide variety of computer and internet tasks when they began in the DNP. *Evaluator’s note:* this may overestimate current skill level, based on the reported lack of completion of the Northstar program, and comments of focus group participants.

Survey respondents were most positive about learning how to keep themselves safe from online scams, viruses, and identity theft. Considering the difficulty all focus group participants reported with the Information Literacy segment of the Northstar learning system, the topic of scams, viruses, and identity theft may require special attention. The next most frequently identified topic that respondents wanted to learn more about was Microsoft Office. Two of the four focus group participants mentioned the desire to learn technology skills that would enhance their resumes, especially if they earn certificates documenting their skill. These results correspond to the goals identified by survey respondents: 80% or more want to learn more about technology to get more education or to get a job or a better job.

Focus group participants were positive about the program, both with what they were able to learn noting the increased confidence the new skills brought, and now having a home computer and internet access. One focus group participant emphasized the value of being able to keep up in a digital society, another mentioned that after completing the Northstar class, he was accepted into a STEM training program, and the third looks forward to taking more training to qualify her for quality employment.

An interviewee observed that participants gained independence through the DNP, now able to perform digital tasks such as applying for jobs or accessing needed services on their own. Uplift Northwest also learned more about the needs and interests of their clients and the value of the laptop incentive.

Participants suggestions:

- Cover some of the Northstar lessons in an in-person format, specifically job search and information literacy.
- Add workshops on:
  - making better use of a smartphone;
  - using technology to collaborate in the workplace;
  - digital troubleshooting
- Point participants to resources for advanced training.

Interviewee suggestion:

- Continued the program; seek funding to continue the laptop incentive;
- Continue with Northstar, but consider omitting some segments and provide other ways for learners to show mastery if needed;
- Develop a series of in-person workshops that build from introductory to more advanced.

Evaluator’s notes:

- Consider employing a screen for hidden disabilities that may create learning (or testing) barriers. This could be as simple as a few questions about difficulties learning in school or

whether they had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan in school. Resources are available.

- Ensure that participants are aware of the support available from staff to help them overcome learning barriers with the Northstar system or other technology challenges. Model using the computer to find answers to computer problems.
- Track statistics provided by Northstar to identify segments that seem especially challenging for Uplift Northwest participants and considering designing workshops around those segments.
- Identify resources for participants interested in further learning to facilitate their next steps. Consider documenting these resources in a handout. Continue to update the handout, adding and subtracting resources as they change, and as new participant interests emerge.

## World Relief of Western Washington Summary

This report is based on:

- Two online focus groups (one in Dari with 13 participants and one in Ukrainian with 12 participants, plus an interpreter in each group);
- Presurveys with 10 participants, 3 of whom also completed a postsurvey; \*interpret with caution;
- Interviews with the Digital Navigator and Program Manager;
- Intake data provided for 158 participants;
- World Relief's final report submitted to the WDC including services from October 2022 through September 2023.

*Evaluator's note:* both the intake data and the presurvey data should be interpreted with caution. Interviewees mentioned that the data collection approach used for the Digital Navigator Program was not effective for this group. The WDC's intake survey seems to have been filled out incompletely and possibly incorrectly. The evaluation survey received responses from only 10 World Relief participants. Although the participants answered questions with internal consistency, additional feedback should be gathered before making any programmatic decisions based on those sources.

World Relief focuses on welcoming and supporting refugees from all over the world as they work to build new lives in Washington. World Relief participants arrived in the U.S. through U.S. resettlement programs. The participants in the WDC database represented a total of 17 different languages, with about half speaking Dari. In addition to resettlement, immigration services, employment, and youth and family services, World Relief offers both online and in-person English classes. The Digital Navigator Program (DNP) was integrated into their ESL program.

World Relief had tried to create a DNP in the past and had developed its own relationship with InterConnection.org (the provider of the DNP laptops) but lacked a stable Digital Navigator (DN) to lead it. The DNP grant provided the opportunity to support a DN and establish the program. In addition to the laptops provided through the DNP grant, InterConnection donated a large number of Chromebooks for World Relief customers. Integrated with World Relief's ESL program, the focus of the device distribution and internet access was to enable customers who could not attend in-person ESL courses to attend online, reasoning that their initial focus should be on learning English, which

would make everything else, including digital literacy, easier to learn. Because of InterConnection's donation, the organization did not need to develop a process for narrowing the pool of recipients; however, distribution and set up of so many devices (about 250 of them at the time of the interview, possibly up to more than 300 at the time of the final report) along with needed support fell to the DN. Using this one-on-one approach (relying on the basic English skills of participants or a translator app) the DN was able to get all World Relief customers who requested a device set up with one (both DNP laptops and InterConnection-donated Chromebooks) as well as information about ACP and free cloud services (to save them the cost of software), and then support them as specific needs arose.

At enrollment, none of the participants had a computer at home, though many had smartphones with data plans, and some had tablets. Interviewees and focus group participants alike indicated that most participants needed instruction on basic technology use as well as the more advanced technology skills needed for many jobs. Focus group participants in the Dari group rated themselves as having an average skill level of 2.1 on a 0 to 10 scale of technology skills when they started with the DNP and the Ukrainian group rated their average starting skill level a little higher at 3.9. Focus group participants were adamant about their need for additional digital literacy training, saying that even if they learn to use technology well enough to function within World Relief's system, they still are unable to function outside it. Given these statements, it is difficult to reconcile the data from the intake form indicating that about three-fourths of World Relief's DNP participants were "Very comfortable" using a computer and a smartphone. The lower rates of participants who were "Very comfortable" with other tasks were more consistent with focus group comments (using email: 20%; working on their resumes: 9%; using Zoom: 14%; or looking for and applying for a job online 9%). Survey respondents showed a similar pattern: some comfort with computer tasks, especially the basics (though less than suggested in the intake survey), and less comfort with using the internet.

At least two-thirds of survey respondents wanted to learn to use a computer, and to stay safe online while they use the internet to shop and track schoolwork. More than half also wanted to learn to use a smartphone, to connect to the internet at home or away, to use Microsoft Office, and to apply for a job online. Focus group participants confirmed this, explaining that they can use their computers for Zoom to attend English language classes, but they are unable to use them to search for or apply for jobs, or to work on their resumes.

Focus group participants who supplied pre and post ratings of their skills estimated that their skill increased from an average of 2.8 on a ten-point scale, to 5.2, advancing an average of about a quarter of the overall skill scale.

Interviewees expressed their commitment to continuing the DNP, with the hope of obtaining funding to expand it. Participants would also like to see it expanded to include classes on using computers for more than their ESL class.

*Evaluator's notes:* consider restarting small group workshops that were effective early in the DNP; regularly review the WDC's Digital Equity Asset Map, (<https://www.seekingwdc.org/digital-equity-asset-map>) a rich resource for locating free or low-cost devices and training in multiple languages.