



Owen County Digital Inclusion Plan



Owen County Digital Inclusion Plan

Goals & Strategies

1. Build/upgrade affordable and adequate broadband connectivity throughout the community and improve adoption
 - **Strategy 1-A:** Identify broadband investment priority areas (BIPAs) in the community. These may include areas in need of broadband investment to upgrade existing service and/or stimulate competition.
 - **Strategy 1-B:** Draft a request for proposals (RFP) for providers to invest in the BIPAs. This RFP should establish a minimum level (e.g., internet speed available) desired. RFP should result in an estimated cost to invest in the BIPA at the level required.
 - **Strategy 1-C:** Secure buy-in from local government and other stakeholders to provide funds and other resources to providers investing in the BIPAs. This includes identifying potential local, state, or federal sources.
 - **Strategy 1-D:** Streamline easements, rights-of-way, property tax abatements, incentives, and others to ensure ROI is maximized for providers. Offer help to providers that have secured federal or state funds to invest in your community so they can begin construction/upgrades as soon as possible.
 - **Strategy 1-E:** Identify or develop discounted internet service plans in partnership with internet providers, schools, and other key stakeholders.
 - **Strategy 1-F:** Design and implement an awareness campaign of discounted service plans, as well as efforts to increase adoption among community residents, businesses, and organizations.

2. Ensure residents have access to quality and reliable devices.
 - **Strategy 2-A:** Work with local schools and other nonprofits to launch a tech savvy volunteer corps (TSVC) made up of students and adults that can a) reformat donated devices; b) provide technical assistance; c) and/or provide digital literacy workshops.
 - **Strategy 2-B:** Establish a device give-away or loan program in partnership with community nonprofits. Device program should be administered by a local organization and coordinated with donating businesses and organizations as well



as the tech savvy volunteer corp. Or, establish a branch of existing device programs such as PC's for People.

- **Strategy 2-C:** Partner with local nonprofits involved in the delivery of social programs to potentially identify community residents in need of devices and/or digital literacy workshops. Likewise, work closely with schools to identify families in need of devices as well.

3. Improve digital literacy and skills among all residents.

- **Strategy 3-A:** Inventory community anchor institutions and other relevant organizations (e.g., libraries, bookstores, community colleges, churches, etc.) with access to fast internet and devices that are better positioned to host digital literacy workshops and/or provide public access to devices and internet.
- **Strategy 3-B:** Once locations conducive to hosting digital literacy workshops and existing efforts are identified, jointly develop a schedule to offer frequent low-cost workshops targeting multiple groups in the community. TSVC can help conduct these workshops in addition to existing teaching and faculty.

4. Integrate digital inclusion strategies into community, economic, and workforce development.

- **Strategy 4-A:** In partnership with the local economic development organizations, the Owen County Chamber of Commerce, and/or Spencer Main Street, survey existing businesses to identify their information technology and workforce needs.
- **Strategy 4-B:** In partnership with the local economic development organizations, Owen County Chamber of Commerce, and/or Spencer Main Street, develop and implement an ecosystem with an emphasis on developing products and services more aligned to the digital economy (e.g., artificial intelligence startups, app development, online services, consulting, data analysis, etc.) as well as assess and improve business and organization's online presence.
- **Strategy 4-C:** Identify additional facilities in the community beyond the new Overstreet Center that could potentially be transformed into business incubators, co-working spaces, telework nesting, and/or tech hubs.



- **Strategy 4-D:** Develop and implement a digital engagement plan to a) improve online presence; b) proactively manage community's online reputation; c) and leverage digital platforms to increase civic engagement, trust and responsiveness.
 - **Strategy 4-E:** Work with local schools and businesses to conduct events where students or residents may compete to develop apps or online services to improve services, access to information, community responsiveness, education, and/or quality of life in general.
5. Strive to establish and sustain a digital equity ecosystem. Digital equity ecosystems are defined as the interactions between individuals, populations, and their larger socioeconomic and technical environments that play a role in shaping digital inclusion work.
- **Strategy 5-A:** Expand the digital advisory team into a broader coalition of digital inclusion stakeholders in the community. This coalition can monitor implementation of the plan and review progress twice per year, coordinate networking around digital inclusion, and serve as a liaison to additional community coalitions.
 - **Strategy 5-B:** Formalize tech savvy volunteer corps by establishing a recruiting, management, and mentorship system as well as providing continuous funding and academic incentives for participating students.
 - **Strategy 5-C:** Ensure that digital inclusion is a community and economic development priority in addition to a social justice issue.
6. Increase the educational attainment level to enable more residents the ability to afford internet access by creating and supporting high-paying technology-related jobs in Owen County.
- **Strategy 6-A:** Engage with local high schools to create a robust program that enables students to explore technology-related careers within the county.
 - **Strategy 3-B:** Promote the new skilled workforce to current and prospective employers in the technology sector.



**REGIONAL
OPPORTUNITY
INITIATIVES**

