DigitalLIFT

Closing the Digital Divide Through Nonprofit Capacity Building

www.communitytechnetwork.org
The pandemic has dramatically highlighted the digital divide that affects our country’s most vulnerable.

In March 2020, Community Tech Network (CTN) leveraged 13 years of experience providing digital literacy education in California and Texas to create and deploy a nonprofit capacity building program which trains nonprofit and government agencies to improve the digital literacy skills of their clients.

Building on this successful work, CTN is developing DigitalLIFT, a scalable program which will train hundreds and eventually thousands of social service agency staff on the best practices related to delivering digital inclusion programming, including access to curriculum, outreach material, evaluation tools and proven processes so they may bridge the digital divide for their clients.

These newly cultivated skills will increase client access to services and public benefits, while reducing the isolation that impacts health.
COVID-19 has surfaced new challenges to digital literacy, especially for vulnerable communities, accelerating the need for online services, news, and communication. Telehealth emerged at the forefront of healthcare access, further preventing those without devices or digital literacy skills from participating in quality health care.

Internet access is essential, and those without the skills to use the internet are at risk of social isolation, economic disadvantage, and unnecessarily compromised health.

Older adults continue to need access to technology.

66% of organizations report that they need increased funding to meet this challenge. *

79% of agencies were not able to expand internet access for older adults during the pandemic. *

CTN will offer DigitalLIFT, a scalable program that builds the capacity of frontline agencies serving communities that lack digital literacy skills, devices, and/or home broadband. DigitalLIFT will increase the pool of qualified digital literacy trainers serving low-income job seekers who will greatly benefit from social and geographical connection.

DigitalLIFT leverages the insights CTN has gained from its time-tested digital literacy programs, and packages CTN's proven and continually updated curricula, program management and impact tracking systems and tools, together with hybrid train-the-trainer program and multilingual and multicultural curriculum that helps partnering agencies easily jumpstart their capacity building efforts.
To support these goals, CTN will:

- **Collaborate with regional nonprofit groups** to promote DigitalLIFT and recruit social service agencies.

- **Provide each agency** with 8 to 12 hours of **virtual group training**: access to **multilingual curricula, client assessments** and guides; and individual, **weekly check-ins** to ensure fidelity and success.

- **Implement and support partners’ initial assessments and pre-survey analysis** with clients to determine digital literacy level, home internet access, and need for devices.

- **Help partners develop a plan for addressing specific technology needs** - internet connectivity, device access, digital skills training, and suitable apps, functions, or languages that clients need.

- **Support partners to identify, procure, configure, and distribute digital devices** for clients.

- **Train partner staff** on: helping clients acquire low-cost internet service; teaching basic-intermediate digital skills for tablets and computers; volunteer recruitment and training to support ongoing digital literacy skills; adult learning principles and internet safety; outreach; and evaluation.

- **Provide support for conducting evaluations** at one month and six months after the basic training is completed by their clients.

- **Provide ongoing support via online forums** that enable members to share ideas and ask questions.
Once trained, partner agencies will implement digital literacy training, designed to meet their client needs and interests. Ultimately, by understanding how to work with adult learners and teaching basic digital literacy skills, partner staff will help learners cultivate skills that increase their access to important online services such as telehealth, employment resources, and government assistance.

Simultaneously, learners will also reduce their isolation by connecting to friends, loved ones, and neighbors. Newfound digital literacy skills, broadband connection, and provided devices will enable a client to find resources that support their overall health and wellbeing, learn to access employment options or job training; find opportunities for physical exercise, including online classes; enhance their educational attainment and job prospects through online classes; receive high-quality healthcare through telehealth services; and build social connections and support systems that reduce social isolation.

In the first year, DigitalLIFT hopes to recruit and train 100 partner agencies, who will in turn educate 6,000 learners obtaining the following outcomes*:

- **60%** will report increased social connections and decreased social isolation.
- **65%** will report an increase in their ability to find health information.
- **70%** will report they can independently and safely use the internet and online tools.
- **80%** of those who sought employment resources will report they were able to do so.

*Outcome results based on one year of CTN learner outcomes.*
This has been a vital program during the COVID-19 pandemic...

Our collaboration has given us the resources we needed in order for us to help our older adults learn how to receive healthcare access from home.

Debbie Uchida
Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly
San Francisco

In the long-term, DigitalLIFT will:

- **Promote a culture of health** through the use of online resources, including telehealth, fitness and nutrition resources, and access to government support services;
- **Nurture strong social connection** among residents through the use of digital communication tools, leading to cross-sector and community-based networks; and
- **Create a network of agencies equipped to provide ongoing digital literacy training**, which will foster a strong infrastructure with adequate capacity among nonprofit organizations.

POSSIBLE MARKET IN THE UNITED STATES

- **10,588 Family Services Organizations**
  based on CauseIQ's analysis of IRS data

- **36,515 Veteran Services Organizations**
  based on CauseIQ's analysis of IRS data

- **79,536 Senior Services Organizations**
  based on analyzing IRS data
In response to the pandemic, CTN launched the Home Connect program to provide homebound older adults a tablet, help enrolling in home internet and remote digital literacy training.

Since April of 2020 CTN has served over 500 older adults in partnership with 60 agencies. This work led to the creation of CTN’s nonprofit capacity building program, serving 11 nonprofit partners in California, Texas and New York.

This fee-based program provides partners with customized curriculum, training for trainers on adult learning principles and the digital divide, as well as program management resources such as sample intake forms, program evaluation tools, list of low-cost internet and device options.

DigitalLIFT is the result of working with these partners and fielding dozens of inquiries from agencies across the country.
CTN’s mission is to unite organizations and volunteers to transform lives through digital literacy. To fulfill its mission, CTN has been working to close the digital divide since 2008, by providing inclusive, accessible, digital literacy instruction to low-income adults and older adults. The DigitalLIFT team includes the following staff:

**Kami Griffiths, Executive Director/Co-Founder**
has 20 years of experience in the public sector. She has worked for the City of New York Department of Parks & Recreation, managing 27 public access computing centers, teaching computer classes and establishing their volunteer trainer program. She was the Training and Outreach Manager for TechSoup, is a founding member of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), and speaks nationally about digital inclusion.

**Al Ho, Technology Lead**
has a PhD from Caltech; was an IBM developer and researcher in parallel supercomputing; has won IBM Outstanding Technical Achievement Awards (the highest IBM technical award) and other awards; has served as startup co-founder, product and project manager, coder, and researcher; and is fluent in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin.

**Sabrina Tam, Senior Program Manager**
has extensive experience managing multi-cultural projects in the financial services, advertising and market research arena. Sabrina is fluent in English and Cantonese, and conversational in Mandarin.

**Dima Khoury, Training Manager**
has over 20 years of experience in high tech, as a Director of Engineering and Business Operations. Dima retired from Cisco Systems in 2014 and now leverages her experience for the nonprofit sector; mentors at the Miller Center, Global Social Benefit Institute, and Santa Clara University; and coaches social entrepreneurs from around the world.