

What organisations can do

Digital inclusion is a rapidly developing area, which can present a challenge for organisations working to support their communities. Health, community and social service organisations are well placed to help support digital inclusion in the community.

Build organisational awareness of digital inclusion

Organisational leaders can raise internal awareness of digital exclusion as a local issue. For example, through identifying and discussing community experiences of digital exclusion and integrating digital inclusion awareness raising into staff meetings, orientation and/or training.

Organisations can also commit to building staff awareness of local and online digital inclusion supports available to consumers. See *Digital Inclusion: Supports and Resources* fact sheet.

Build staff capacity to support digital inclusion

Health and social service professionals are a trusted source of information, but they do not always have knowledge and confidence in using technology themselves. They also may not be aware of digital inclusion supports

available to consumers. This means they may be less likely to recommend digital tools and supports to consumers, which can be a barrier to digital inclusion.

There are a range of opportunities to build staff capacity to support digital inclusion. See the *Digital inclusion: Supports and resources*; and *Digital inclusion: What professionals can do* fact sheets.

Resource digital skills training and initiatives that support digital inclusion

Health, community and social service organisations are ideally positioned to become local delivery partners of existing digital skills training initiatives.

Basic digital skill building

Joining the [Be Connected Network](#) provides access to resources, grants and opportunities to collaborate with other partners. Organisations delivering Be Connected programs provide group training sessions to build digital skills for adults aged over 50 years. Organisations are supported with coaching, a handbook, promotional materials, session plans and the [online learning portal](#).

Training volunteers or staff members as digital mentors enables one-on-one support to be provided to individuals. Capacity

building grants are available to train local digital mentors through a 'train the trainer' model. A [Digital Mentors Handbook](#), which outlines eight principles of effective digital mentoring, is also available. These principles incorporate the behaviours, attitudes and actions that lead to positive mentor-learner partnerships. There is also a free 30-minute [digital mentoring training module](#) online.

Many people are not aware of the support available to help them get online and improve their digital skills. Be Connected provides downloadable marketing and community engagement materials, including resources to promote '[Get Online Week](#)' which takes place every October.

Digital health skill building

Health, community and social service organisations can become a delivery partner of [Health My Way](#), an 'offshoot' of the Be Connected program. Grant opportunities are occasionally available. Funded organisations provide group digital health literacy training or mentoring to support people aged over 18 years to gain essential skills and confidence in managing their health and wellbeing online. Organisations are supported with coaching, a handbook, promotional materials, session plans and the [online learner portal](#).

Digital skill building for work and life

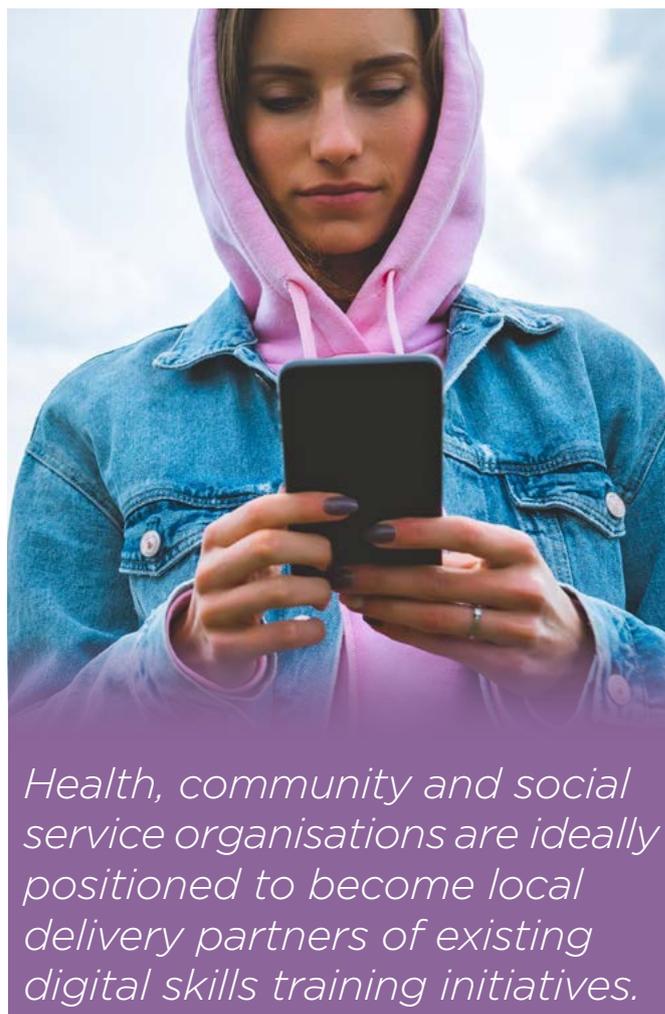
Organisations can become local delivery partners of the digital skills training program, [Digital Springboard](#) offered by Infoxchange. Digital Springboard helps people learn the digital skills they need to thrive in work and life. Infoxchange provides delivery partners with training, resources and support.

Provide access to technology and connectivity

Access to computers and free wi-fi (wireless internet) in public spaces can be a critical support for people who find it difficult to access a device or afford data costs at home or on their mobile phone.

Health, community and social service organisations can support digital inclusion by providing access to computers and free wi-fi on their premises. Extending the reach of free wi-fi access into suitable outdoor areas is becoming more widespread, especially if there are limits on indoor capacity.

Loan device programs are a means of supporting people who face barriers to accessing the internet. Information on [how to set up a loan device program](#) is available from Be Connected.



Provide inclusive technology and design

Health, community and social service organisations are experienced in supporting the diverse needs of their communities and are well placed to lead by example in offering inclusive digital services and technology.

Organisations can:

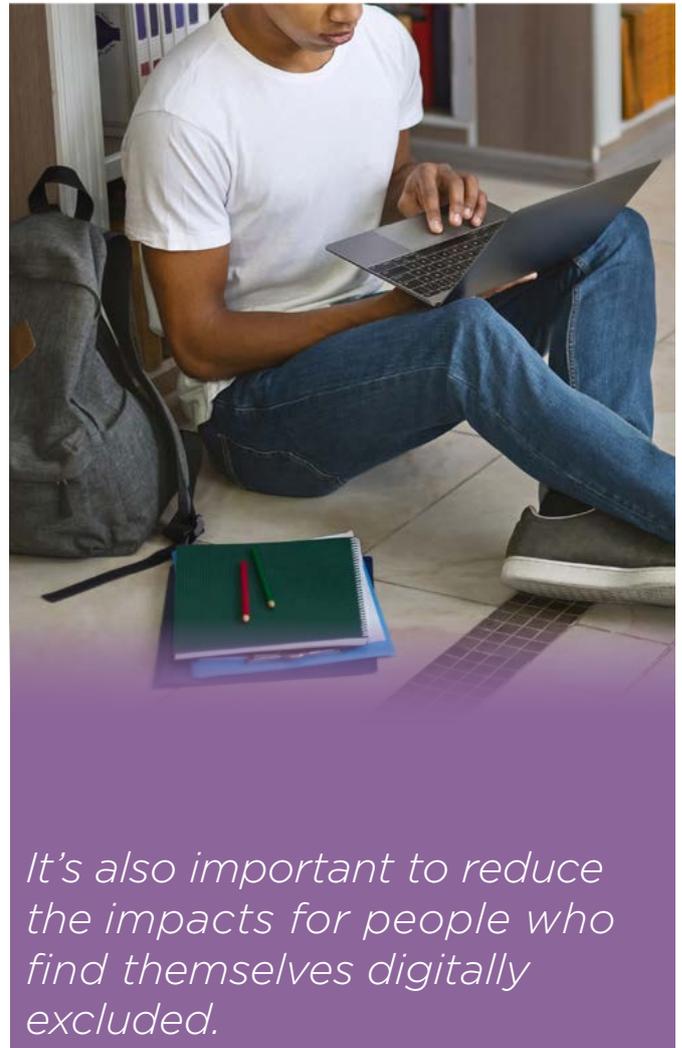
- commit to designing and reviewing services with people's needs at the centre (not technology)
- ensure online content conforms to level AAA, or minimum level AA of the [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#).
- use online accessibility checklists such as [Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool](#) to gain a quick view of the accessibility of services
- become familiar with the Australian Digital Transformation Agencies [Digital Service Standard](#): a set of best-practice principles to make services accessible for different browsers and devices
- use the Centre for Inclusive Design's [checklist for inclusive events and meetings](#)

Also see the *Digital inclusion: Inclusive technology and design* fact sheet.

Commit to guaranteeing off-line services

In addition to working to reduce digital exclusion, it's also important to reduce the impacts for people who find themselves digitally excluded.

By committing to the provision of off-line services, organisations can guarantee easy access to services with no disadvantage to those without a digital connection. This means that for every online engagement



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with consumers, there would be a parallel engagement stream available for those not online (e.g. in-person, phone, mail). This would apply to all services including bookings and payments.

Invest in building organisational digital capacity

In addition to the digital divide experienced at an individual level, there is an 'organisational digital divide' between the private and not-for-profit sectors in Australia, as outlined in Infoxchange's annual reports: [Digital Technology in the not for profit sector](#).

Infoxchange, Connecting Up and Probono Australia have a range of support services

to assist not-for-profits to improve their use of technology. Taking the [ImproveIT Digital Capability Quiz](#) for not-for-profit and community organisations is a great starting place.

The development of the digital skills of health professionals is also increasingly being prioritised in Australia. A suite of online short courses are available through the [Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre](#) and the [Australian Digital Health Agency](#).

Shape local digital inclusion plans

Health, community and social service organisations may be able to lead or contribute to place-based, multi-sector strategies or plans that support digital inclusion. For example, in regional Victoria, there is momentum in addressing the city-country digital divide, through the Victorian Government's [Connecting Regional Communities Program](#). As part of this program regional digital plans outline current and future digital supply and demand and identify gaps in digital capability, affordability and access.

Health, community and social service organisations play a critical role in hearing and amplifying the voices of community members experiencing digital exclusion so that they are represented in local strategies.

Advocate for digital equity and inclusion

Health, community and social service organisations can support existing digital inclusion advocacy campaigns, which include:

Campaigning for more affordable internet

The social service sector has been calling for the NBN to be considered an 'essential service' for some time. Led by the Australian Communications Consumers Action Network (ACCAN), the [No Australian Left Offline](#) campaign calls for affordable broadband - a home internet service that enables all Australians to be online regardless of their personal circumstances or where they live, without putting them into financial stress. For many people on low incomes, broadband is unaffordable. Low income households spend a higher proportion of their household budget on connectivity¹ and are likely to pay more per GB of data.

Calling for a National Digital Inclusion Roadmap

The Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance (ADIA) is calling for a [National Digital Inclusion Roadmap](#) to ensure a coordinated approach to digital inclusion. ADIA is a leading voice on digital inclusion and campaigns to influence federal policy directions. Contact the ADIA to become a member and contribute to national digital inclusion projects. Also see their 6 step action plan on [how to become a digital inclusion influencer](#).

References

- 1 Thomas J, Barraket J, Wilson CK, Rennie E, Ewing S, MacDonald T. *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2019*. RMIT University and Swinburne University of Technology for Telstra; 2019. <https://doi.org/10.25916/5d6478f373869>