Digital inclusion

Supports and resources

For people to be digitally included, the following four domains need to be satisfied:

1. Access to a device
2. Access to an internet connection, with sufficient data
3. The skills, knowledge, confidence and resilience to be online
4. Digital platforms, content and devices that are accessible

Digital inclusion supports and resources are listed under these domains below.

For people needing a device

Public computers and technology

Free computer use is commonly available at public libraries, neighbourhood houses and other public facilities, including some health centres. Local council websites often have information about local computer and internet access options.

Loan devices

Loan devices are also increasingly being offered by public libraries, neighbourhood houses and other public facilities, including some health centres.

Low-cost devices

Low cost refurbished laptops and computers are available from the social enterprise WorkVentures. WhistleOut is a comparison website for consumers who want to purchase devices or telecommunication services. Their website includes guides and reviews of some of the most affordable phone and tablet options.

Devices for older people

WhistleOut has published a guide comparing devices that may suit older people.

Devices for NDIS participants

The NDIS has information on how NDIS participants can access devices.

For people needing an adequate internet connection or sufficient data

Free wi-fi

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

Free public wi-fi hotspots are increasingly dotted around towns and cities (although less in rural areas). Wi-fi is often found in central business districts, main streets, libraries, community centres, shopping centres, cafés and fast food chain outlets. It is also sometimes available in art galleries, museums, city halls, sporting venues, gardens, universities and hospitals.

In Victoria, VicFreeWiFi is a program which sees free wi-fi available outdoors in the Melbourne CBD and central Bendigo and Ballarat. Free public wi-fi networks are also planned for Shepparton and Geelong as part of the Connecting Regional Communities Program.

A map of free wi-fi locations across Melbourne is available via the website and smart phone application called 'Wi-Fi Map'. Any region or business can use this platform to promote free wi-fi hotspots. Promoting the availability and location of free wi-fi hotspots on maps and through other local communications can help reduce digital exclusion.

Finding the best value internet services

WhistleOut is a comparison website for consumers who want to purchase devices or telecommunication services. Their
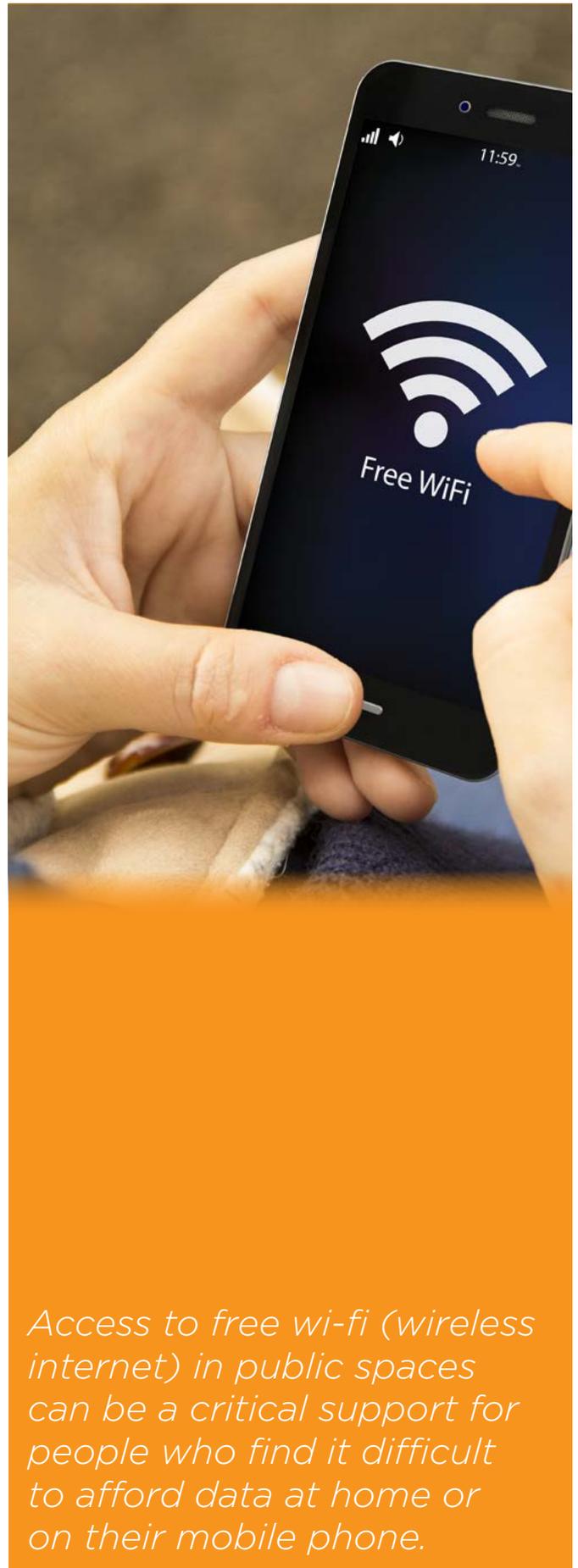
Access to free wi-fi (wireless internet) in public spaces can be a critical support for people who find it difficult to afford data at home or on their mobile phone.

website includes guides and reviews of some of the most affordable mobile data and home internet services. The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network provides a list of internet service providers' special offers available to eligible low income households.

For people needing to build skills, knowledge, confidence and resilience

Basic digital skill building

Be Connected is a national digital literacy program that supports adults to increase their confidence, skills and online safety when using digital technology. Funded by the Australian Government, Be Connected provides easy to use online learning resources, and access to the Be Connected Network, a group of community partners that provide free support in-person or via video call.

The *Be Connected* learning portal is an excellent place to start for people wanting to support a loved one to get online. Easy to use and understand, resources include short video lessons covering a huge range of topics, including:

- The absolute basics
- Getting to know your device
- Getting started online
- Safety first
- Connecting to others
- Online hobbies
- Introduction to online banking
- Introduction to myGov

Printable guides accompany the lessons, which have been translated into a number of languages other than English.

The Be Connected 'Get Started' smart phone app helps individuals get loved ones online in five easy steps. The app provides guidance on how to support family members or friends to take their first steps in using computers, accessing the internet, and learning new digital skills.

A directory and map of local organisations providing support and training is available on the Be Connected Network website or via calling the helpline on 1300 795 897.

Digital health skill building

An 'offshoot' of the Be Connected initiative, Health My Way provides digital health literacy training to support people aged over 18 years to gain essential skills and confidence in managing their health and wellbeing online. Training topics include:

- Introduction to MyGov (portal to access government services and documents)
- Introduction to My Health Record (portal to access personal health records)
- My Health Record - privacy and security
- How to find credible websites for health and wellbeing information
- Finding and downloading health related apps

Digital skills for work and life

Digital Springboard is a program by Infoxchange and Google to help people gain digital skills for work and life. Providing free training through local partners that include community organisations and libraries, Digital Springboard delivers face-to-face courses that teach digital skills for employment, money management, technology skills and more.

Digital mentors

Connecting people with a digital mentor can be a valuable support for those who are new to using a device or going online. To find out if digital mentors are available locally, see the map of participating organisations on the Be Connected Network website or call the helpline on 1300 795 897.

Intergenerational digital mentors

Younger people who are tech savvy can be a great resource to introduce older people to digital devices and all the things they can do online. Lively is a social enterprise that trains and employs young people to provide services to help older people to stay connected and live well.

Lively matches older people with a local young person who provides flexible support, including:

- Help to get online to learn new ways of connecting and communicating with others remotely via technology (e.g. video calling)

- Social phone or video calls to relieve loneliness and isolation

- Smart plugs (enable electrical device use by mobile app) to monitor the health and safety of an older person in their home, and to alert family or caregivers of concerns

- Help to access essential health services over the phone or by video (telehealth)

Lively operates in metropolitan Melbourne (and other states) and is fee-for-service. Home Care Packages can be used to access this program.

For people needing accessibility supports

Assistive technology for digital inclusion

NDIS participants may be able to access assistive technology including supports for digital inclusion.

Assistive Technology Australia provides a range of information including product guides, supplier directories, and a platform to buy and sell second-hand equipment.

Vision Australia provides technology advice to help people who are blind or have low vision to find and use technology such as phones, computers, magnifiers, braille and voice assistants.

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