

Western New York Digital Equity Coalition Full-Member Meeting

October 16, 2024

Attendance

- Ann Battaglia; Executive Director; Healthy Community Alliance
- Christine Carr-Barmasse; Executive Director; Mission:Ignite
- Courtney Deuro; Program Assistant; Center for Self Advocacy
- Katie Earl; Community Recreation Coordinator for the Aging; Erie County Senior Services
- Matt Giordano; President; Villa Maria College
- Vicki Haas; Business Assistance Specialist; Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
- Trent Hamilton; Community Coalition Member; Entrepreneur School of Thought
- Steve Heist; VP, Information Technology & CIO; OneBridge Benefits
- Amanda Horner; Outreach Specialist; Americorps and Mission: Ignite
- Hex Kleinmarten; Digital Literacy Coordinator; Literacy Buffalo Niagara
- Don Matteson; Chief Program Officer; Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation
- Sam Mattle; Executive Director; Center for Self-Advocacy
- Alan Meyers; Fatherhood Connection Facilitator; Cattaraugus Community Action
- Deborah Porter; Founder & President; YES Workforce
- Bob Spino; Director of Technology; Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES
- Andy Strohmeier; Integrating Special Populations Coordinator, Clinical and Translational Research Center; University at Buffalo
- Robb Szczesniak; Senior Vice President - Technology Manager; M&T Bank
- Heidi Ziemer; Outreach & Digital Equity Coordinator; Western New York Library Resources Council

Announcements

- The coalition recently turned four years old, with its first meeting held on September 30, 2020.
- Yes Workforce received an AT&T Connected Learning award and is rolling out digital literacy workshops throughout the community. They are seeking partners for audiences or venues. Contact Deborah Porter at daporter@wobblee.com if you're interested.
- Center for Self Advocacy is hosting a healthcare summit on October 17th at the Jacobs Student Medical Center. Walk-ins are accepted but do not include lunch.

Steering Committee Update

- No significant movement in financials since the previous month.

- A \$450 reimbursement request for administrative costs is pending.
- The Steering Committee previewed the Marconi Society's digital inclusion training, but deemed not cost-effective at \$500 per seat. The Marconi Society declined a counteroffer for full coalition access at \$5,000-\$6,000.
- The Steering Committee discussed goals for 2025 including:
 - Developing an advocacy agenda
 - Planning another convening
 - Securing speakers for full-member meetings
 - Getting a head start on Digital Inclusion Week 2025
- Also, if the ConnectALL Digital Equity Technical Assistance grant is funded, plans include:
 - Developing shared metrics for broadband access, equipment access, and digital skills
 - Conducting a community survey on digital literacy
 - Implementing Results-Based Accountability
 - Hosting educational sessions on the eight covered populations under the Digital Equity Act

Digital Inclusion Week 2024 Recap

- The Peace Bridge was lit in teal twice (Monday and Friday), the official color for Digital Inclusion Week.
- A proclamation from New York State Senator Sean Ryan was secured, though details are pending.
- The Communications Committee created social media content for the week.
- This was a good start, but we should start planning early to improve and expand our activities for Digital Inclusion Week 2025.

Project Updates

Digital Equity Stories Project

- The planned kickoff meeting was postponed and will be rescheduled.
- The goal is to collect stories about challenges in achieving digital inclusion and benefits of digital access.
- Ultimately, we'd like to create a geotagged online library of these stories for use in grant writing, legislative advocacy, and community education.

Strategic Case Making Project

- Building on a training from The Case Made from January through March 2023, the Strategic Casemaking Working Group is developing a case for digital inclusion that encourages action.
- A draft slide deck is in progress, with plans to present it to the full coalition in January 2025.
- The project includes developing counter-arguments/pivots to common objections about digital inclusion work.

General Discussion

- The importance of community assessment for digital literacy was emphasized, noting gaps in understanding between technology skills and digital literacy.
- The lack of community-level indicators for digital skills was identified as a significant data gap.
- Potential collaboration between AT&T Connected Learning award recipients and other local initiatives was suggested for data sharing and program coordination.

Next Meeting

- The November meeting will be rescheduled due to travel conflicts.
- The next meeting is set for Tuesday, November 19th at 9:00 AM.
- This will be the last meeting for 2024 on account of typically frenzied end-of-year schedules.