

Western New York Digital Equity Coalition Steering Committee Meeting Summary

October 9, 2025

Attendance

Present:

- Christine Carr-Barmasse
- Steve Heist
- Don Matteson
- Al Meyers

Excused

- Bob Spino

Absent:

- Sam Mattle
- Simone Ragland

Financial Update

- The coalition had minimal financial activity this month, with the only expenditure being stipends for Coalition Community Members.
- Don presented preliminary projections showing approximately \$66,000 of the \$100,000 Moving Forward Together grant will be expended by year-end, leaving an estimated balance of \$25,000-\$41,000 carrying into 2026.
- Key grant expenditures include: \$6,200 paid to Clear Impact for results-based accountability scorecard licensing; \$19,953 paid to Clementine Gold Group in August; and two additional Clementine Gold payments of \$19,953 expected in November and December.

- Additional bills are expected for RBA 101 training and certifications for four people, which may reduce the 2026 starting balance.

Digital Literacy Survey Development

- The Clementine Gold Group has drafted a survey available for pilot testing. Don noted that the original draft focused on broad digital inclusion rather than digital literacy as contracted. He developed and shared an alternative draft with much more extensive focus on digital literacy specifically.
- Don is concerned that Clementine Gold might intend to field the survey only digitally, which would introduce significant sample bias. He will confirm with them that the survey will be multi-modal.
- The survey is currently being pilot tested by Christine and Liz's team at Mission Ignite, Sam's contacts, and other coalition members to assess flow, length, question appropriateness, and overall usability.
- Steve suggested having Clementine Gold provide progress updates to the Steering Committee and review their work against the project plan to ensure accountability.
- The coalition's next meeting with Clementine Gold Group is scheduled for **Monday, October 20, 2025, at 1:00 PM**. All Steering Committee members are welcome to attend, and Don will forward the meeting invitation.

Digital Inclusion Week 2025

- The coalition successfully obtained and shared a video from Representative Kennedy's office through efforts by Christine, Susan, and Heidi at Mission: Ignite.
- Don faced a significant setback in developing DIW fact sheets when the U.S. Census Bureau website stopped displaying data due to the federal government shutdown. This prevented access to the American Community Survey data needed for Digital Inclusion Week materials.
- Despite limitations, Don created and distributed three graphics and four county-specific fact sheets for Digital Inclusion Week. He had previously sent additional materials to AI for possible inclusion in Connected Communities in Action's newsletter and website, which were ultimately published.

- Don acknowledged the rollout was less robust than desired due to both the data access issue and personal circumstances that limited his available time.
- Comparing year-over-year, the coalition showed improvement from Digital Inclusion Week 2024 to 2025. Don noted this is not a funding issue but rather a commitment issue, as most coalition members beyond Mission: Ignite did not actively promote Digital Inclusion Week for awareness-raising.
- Looking ahead to 2026, the coalition has a full year to plan and develop graphics templates that can be reused with Digital Inclusion Week-specific language.

Strategic Planning for 2026

Advocacy Work

- The coalition plans to prioritize advocacy efforts in early 2026, including completing the strategic case for digital equity using Strategic Casemaking methodology.
- This work will focus on developing policy priorities, strengthening existing relationships, and building new ones as needed. The advocacy work will revive the dormant Strategic Casemaking project.
- Don anticipates this advocacy work will align well with activities at the state level through the New York State Digital Equity Network (NYSDEN), providing additional leverage and coordination opportunities.

NYSDEN Albany Advocacy Day

- Christine raised the question of timing for NYSDEN's Albany advocacy day, currently soft-penciled for early January.
- She expressed preference against scheduling it on a Monday to avoid requiring Sunday travel for NYSDEN members from across the state. The date and logistics remain under discussion at the state network level.

Regional Meetups

- The committee agreed to implement regional meetups throughout Western New York in 2026, though logistics need refinement including location, frequency, coverage approach, and budget allocation.
- The first regional meetup should not be held in Erie County to demonstrate commitment to reaching outlying communities. Given weather considerations, the group suggested holding the first meetup toward the end of March rather than January.
- The cadence remains under discussion based on available resources. One approach under consideration is combining a full coalition convening with a regional meeting by holding them on consecutive days in an outlying location.

Asset Mapping

- Asset mapping emerged as a desired activity for the second consecutive WNYDEC convening. The committee recognized the need to first establish a shared definition of asset mapping before proceeding with implementation.
- Questions remain about whether the existing resource directory fulfills the asset mapping need or whether something more comprehensive is required. Key questions include: What constitutes an asset? What level, scale, breadth, and scope should be included?
- Christine noted that the Finger Lakes Digital Inclusion Coalition has begun asset mapping as part of their NYS Digital Equity Technical Assistance grant and suggested coordinating across NYSDEN coalitions to potentially use a common tool.
- The committee agreed to introduce the asset mapping concept at the next full member meeting and gather input from NDIA and other New York State coalitions about their approaches. Implementation will be deferred until the coalition achieves clarity on scope and best practices.

October Full-Member Meeting

- The next full-member meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, October 15, 2025**.
- Don will look into whether timing works for a November meeting, but will definitely skip a December meeting when attendance typically drops and Don will be on leave, the October meeting will set the stage for 2026 priorities.
- The meeting will touch on three main areas: advocacy work (including the Strategic Casemaking deck), regional meetups, and asset mapping.
- Discussion will focus on advocacy and regional meetings while pausing on asset mapping until we have more insights on approaches to asset mapping from NDIA and the New York State network.

Steering Committee Meeting Structure Discussion

- The committee discussed persistent attendance challenges, with typically only 3 of 7 members present. Don sends reminders one to two days in advance, but members often fail to provide advance notice when unable to attend.
- Don raised concerns about the Steering Committee's effectiveness given persistent low attendance. He emphasized that the committee's purpose is collective decision-making rather than leaving all choices to him.
- The current meeting time (late afternoon, accommodating Don's child pickup schedule) may not work for all members. Previous surveys about availability received only two responses, making it impossible to find mutually acceptable times.
- Steve suggested that if attendance issues persist, members who are consistently no-call/no-shows (more than twice in a row) should be contacted to determine their continued interest. If members cannot commit, the committee should solicit new members from the broader coalition.
- Christine emphasized that committee members should keep each other mutually accountable. The group acknowledged that while coalition work is not anyone's primary job responsibility, basic communication about attendance should not be a heavy burden.
- Don noted that annual steering committee membership renewal occurs in February, giving members an opportunity to step back without feeling they're abandoning a responsibility if their circumstances have changed.