

communities • connect • network

advancing community technology in washington state

A collaborative statewide project involving:



Center to Bridge the Digital Divide

What is Communities Connect Network?

A statewide coalition of public and private organizations working to ensure that Washington state is a leader in “digital inclusion” – the movement to ensure that all individuals have access and the skills to use the Internet and information technologies.

What does CCN do?

- Supports organizations that offer **community technology** * programs that increase digital inclusion of Washington’s underserved communities.
- Conducts research on key aspects of Washington’s digital inclusion.
- Disseminates and trains community technology providers on best practices.
- Provides expertise to policy makers and leaders.
- Brings awareness of the need for and impact of digital inclusion to public officials, business leaders, and the citizens of Washington state.

* - More about Community Technology on accompanying poster.

Removing Barriers to Digital Inclusion

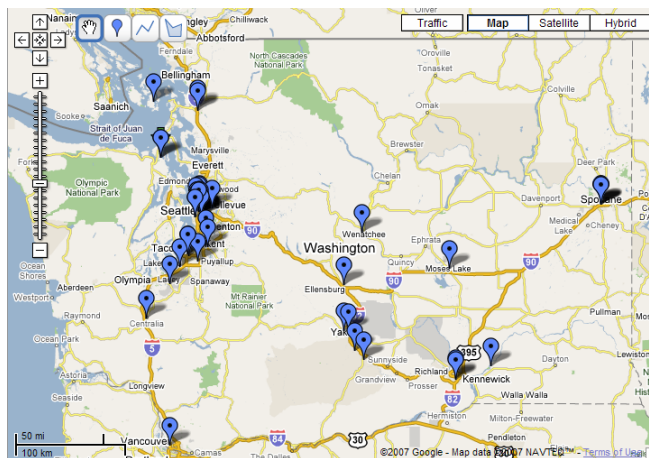
CCN and its members have adopted the Digital Inclusion framework to help individuals, small businesses and non-profits join the information age, by:

- Providing **ACCESS** to computers and the internet
- Building **LITERACY** in using computer and internet technologies
- Making meaningful and useful **CONTENT & SERVICES** available

A Study of CT in Washington State

Last summer, UW conducted a phone survey across 211 agencies in the state identified as community technology providers.

- 47 of these agencies completed the survey, and 7 sites were visited for more in-depth study.
- This was combined with earlier data to provide a snapshot of CT in Washington State.
- Findings indicate both the impact that CT is having on communities, as well as barriers being faced.
- Findings were presented at two Senate Committee hearings in November 2007:
 - **Economic Development, Trade & Management Committee**
 - **Water, Energy and Telecommunications Committee.**



Findings: How Many People Served?

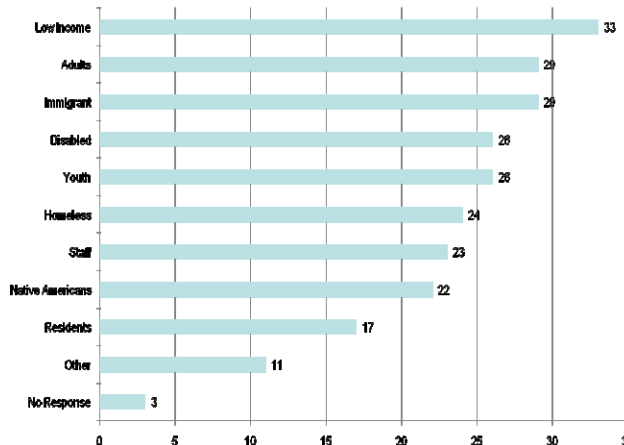
Based on information from **about half** of the known community technology providers in the state– we know that these agencies serve:

99,467 unique users per year.

Weekly counts show that **on average, a user visits 14 times** during the year.

Resulting in an estimated total of **1,392,538 visits per year.**

User Demographics



Benefits

Employment/Economic Benefits

- Developed job skills that prepared them for getting a job
- Empowered to obtain additional technical skills
- Helped gain employment
- Helping users to get a better paying job
- More skilled work force
- Better educated population

Academic Skills and Literacy

- Providing references and/or resumes for college or jobs
- Academic improvement like raising math scores one letter grade
- Preparing users to obtain a GED or go to college
- Connecting families to technology
- Ability to help school aged children

Social Inclusion and Personal Growth

- Relationship building/friendship
- Staying out of trouble
- Developing or expanding interests
- Tangible skill development (e.g. leadership, public speaking)
- Providing connections to community leaders
- Building confidence and elevating expectations
- Improving family relationships
- Keeping kids safe by checking their online activities
- Motivate users to take action in their communities
- Community building

Barriers

Inadequate staffing or instructors

- **“Not enough staffing. Kids must be supervised in the CTC but there are not enough people to monitor kids and give them computer access.”**
~ Delridge Neighborhood Development Association, Seattle

Funding issues

- **“It is easier to get technology funding than staff funding.”**
~ Reel Grrls, Seattle
- **“The organization currently lacks the requisite money to replace their aging desktop and laptop computers.”**
~ Washington CASH, Seattle

Insufficient space, computers or technologies

- **“Once I wanted to study the computers, but there wasn’t room.”**
~ Yesler Terrace, Seattle
- **“It’s hard to run an Internet business with no bandwidth.”**
~ Stone Soup, Republic

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More about Community Technology

A **Community Technology** program is a community-based digital inclusion program that is engaged in diffusing information and communications technology in local communities, focusing services on technology underserved and needy populations, and providing services in one or more of these areas:

1. Education and skill building opportunities,
2. Hardware and software,
3. Internet connectivity, and
4. Developing locally relevant content and delivering vital services via technology.



Community Technology programs level the playing field of opportunity by serving low-income and low-literacy residents, residents of rural communities, seniors, people with disabilities, at-risk youth, immigrants/refugees and people of color as well as small disadvantaged businesses and non-profit organizations.

Programs are usually provided by a wide range of non-profit or public community settings. These may be youth and community centers, small business and workforce training centers, mutual assistance associations and settlement houses, low-income housing, libraries or schools opened for community programs.



Learn More ...
Please Visit our Web Site!

<http://www.communitiesconnect.org/>

More about Digital Inclusion

For years many policy-makers, researchers and community leaders have struggled to close the digital divide. Over the years, conventional wisdom has shown that closing the digital divide requires many things, more than just having a computer. A current, more positive framework is to use the term **"digital inclusion."** The Communities Connect Network and others are encouraging state and local adoption of this framework in order to be more strategic about investments.

Digital Inclusion encompasses three areas:

1. Access
2. Technology Literacy, and
3. Relevant Content and Services.

Digital Inclusion seeks equity for all residents, as well as small businesses and community-based (non-profit) organizations. The three areas include these components:

Access

- ✓ Connectivity to the Internet
- ✓ End user equipment: hardware and software

Technology Literacy

- ✓ Skills required in order to utilize the equipment and Internet effectively for essential services, education, employment, civic engagement and cultural participation.

Relevant Online Content and Services

- ✓ Services available for those in need.
- ✓ Culturally and educationally appropriate design.
- ✓ Marketing and placement appropriate to reach underserved communities.
- ✓ Enabling of content production and distribution by lower capacity residents, businesses and organizations.

More about CCN

The Communities Connect Network is led by a team of private and public organizations working together to expand awareness of the CT Field in Washington State.



City of Seattle
Department of Information Technology
Community Technology Program



NPower Seattle



One Economy Corporation



Stone Soup Non-Profit Consultants

What can be done?

Communities Connect Network has studied solutions pioneered beyond Washington. Below are several innovative approaches used in other states designed to improve digital inclusion for their underserved communities.

States like California, Illinois, Minnesota, and Ohio have ...

- ... Directed state agencies to report on funds invested in community technology and digital inclusion programs.
- ... Defined "community technology" and "digital inclusion" in state code.
- ... Directed state government surplus PC's to be refurbished and distributed to non-profits and digital inclusion programs.
- ... Developed a state digital inclusion plan.
- ... Developed a digital inclusion fund for community technology programs and directed revenue from cell towers on state land towards the fund.
- ... Mapped community technology centers and assessed their impact.
- ... Mapped barriers to, and opportunities for, digital inclusion.
- ... Directed state agencies to make community technology centers eligible for programs (after-school, economic development, workforce training, health education).
- ... Negotiated free or reduced cost broadband connections for non-profit organizations helping underserved communities.
- ... Enabled community technology and digital inclusion programs to be eligible to receive funds from appropriate settlements and fines.
- ... Launched projects that place a computer in every (child's) home (coupled with training & support).
- ... Set-up telecommunications and technology reinvestment initiatives.

Get Involved ...

Please Participate on our Community Site!

<http://communitiesconnect.wikispaces.com/>