



Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint

Let's work together to make WA more digitally inclusive for everyone

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Accessibility

The WA Government is committed to making sure that all Western Australians can access and understand our Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint.

The Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint has been produced in an accessible format on WA.gov.au and hard copies can be provided on request.

If you have any issues accessing this document, please contact us.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Message from the Minister

Hon. Stephen N Dawson MLC

Minister for Emergency Services;
Innovation and the Digital Economy;
Medical Research; Volunteering



In today's world, being online is crucial to manage our finances, get an education, grow or start a new business, stay connected with family and friends, and keep up to date with important news and information crucial to everyday life.

Digital technology has transformed almost all aspects of our lives, and the pace of digitisation has rapidly accelerated in recent years.

Our collective experiences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have taught us digital inclusion is no longer simply a 'want', but rather an increasingly essential part of our lives. The McGowan Government remains committed to ensuring that as the essential parts of everyday life become increasingly digitised, no one is left behind.

We want to ensure all Western Australians can access and use digital technologies, no matter their age, background or where they live.

This is the WA Government's vision for the Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint ('the Blueprint'), a key deliverable of the whole-of-government Digital Strategy 2021-25.

The Blueprint focuses on four priority areas crucial to realising this vision – connectivity, affordability, skills and design. This will require the dedicated collaboration of committed partners – our local communities, libraries, not-for-profits and community services, government and industry – on solutions to improve digital inclusion for people across Western Australia.

This whole-of-government Blueprint provides a centralised and coordinated approach to address issues of digital inequity, and I look forward to seeing more Western Australians enjoying the benefits offered by technology as we make WA a digitally inclusive State.

What is digital inclusion?

Digital inclusion is a basic need for peoples' participation in today's society. It's more than being able to physically connect to the internet. It's also about having the know-how needed to connect, being able to afford those connections, and having access to digital tools and devices that are designed in a way that meets peoples' needs.

There are many factors that contribute to someone not being digitally included, making it a big and difficult problem to solve. However, by working together, we can make sure that all Western Australians are able to fully participate in society, so that no one is left behind in a digital world.



Why we need a Blueprint

Digital technologies are an essential part of everyday life for Western Australians today. So much so, that when their access and use is compromised:

- **People** are unable to stay connected to friends and family, get an education, find a job, and access government and telehealth services.
- **Communities** miss out on opportunities, are unable to stay connected to the world, and economic and social prosperity is diminished.
- **Businesses** are unable to innovate, grow and compete in the digital economy.

Businesses can grow, thrive, and compete in the digital economy

This is a particularly important issue for our large and diverse state, where the distance between our communities means being digitally connected is vital!

Despite the fact that more Australians than ever are using digital devices and the internet,¹ over 2.5 million still remain offline.² And there are many more who still struggle to access and use digital devices and the internet to thrive in today's world.

People can access quality digital services from anywhere

1 Australian Broadband Advisory Council, 2020, Riding the Digital Wave: Report on COVID-19 Trends and Forward Work Program, accessed at <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-centre/publications/riding-digital-wave-report-covid-19-trends-and-forward-work-program>

2 RMIT, 2021, Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2021. accessed at <https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/key-findings-and-next-steps/>

The WA Government wants to address this divide so that Western Australians can participate in the digital world and are prepared for the future. The Blueprint outlines the Government's plan to work collaboratively with committed partners, including the community services and libraries, industry and WA communities, to make our state more digitally inclusive.



People can, learn,
work and live
anywhere in WA

People can
connect and stay
in touch with their
communities and
the world



The issue

Whilst not all people want to be online, for many it is still a matter of not being able to do so. During our consultation, Western Australians told us that they are often not digitally included due to barriers related to connectivity, affordability, skills and design.

Connectivity

Internet services can be unreliable and slow, particularly in regional and remote communities, making it difficult for people to do simple tasks online. Some communities have no coverage at all which stifles access to basic services, innovation and job creation.

Skills

Many Western Australians don't feel confident being online or have the skills to use digital technologies in a way that supports what they care about. Being online can be stressful and unsafe due to misinformation, online scams or just not knowing where to start.

Affordability

People on low income struggle to afford internet connections and value for money data plans. Purchasing devices, such as a computer or laptop, is also an expense beyond many Western Australians' household budgets, resulting in many buying easier to use, but more expensive, mobile devices and prepaid data plans.

Design

Digital services, applications and websites can be hard to use and aren't designed with customers and users' needs at the forefront. Many found Government services and websites difficult and frustrating to use.



Our Blueprint

Our vision

All Western Australians can easily access and use digital technologies.

How we'll achieve our vision

Our vision can only be achieved by delivering initiatives that address the barriers to Western Australians being digitally included.



Connectivity

Being able to connect to quality internet services that are fit for purpose

Everyone should have access to reliable, quality internet connections, even in remote and regional communities. The WA Government will enhance connectivity by exploring new technologies that improve the speed and consistency of connections across the state. We'll also invest in ways to address internet and mobile coverage gaps and quality across WA.

- **Improve access to fixed and mobile broadband** in regional and remote locations in WA.
- Support the **testing of new technologies** that improve connectivity.
- **Improve connectivity** for regional farms and businesses.



Affordability

Having access to affordable digital devices, and quality internet services and data

Everyone should have access to digital devices and internet data allowances appropriate for their needs. The WA Government will improve affordability by providing low or no cost access to digital devices and internet services for low-income earners. These opportunities include repurposing used technology for those who need it, establishing more free Wi-Fi hubs in public spaces and supporting internet access for WA school students.

- Support more **free Wi-Fi** hubs in public spaces.
- **Repurpose technology** for those who need it.
- Support **digital access for students** through WA schools.



Skills

Having the ability to confidently and safely use digital technologies to succeed

Everyone should be able to perform practical, everyday tasks online and feel secure while doing so. The WA Government will improve digital skills by supporting local libraries and community centres to provide training and assistance for people wanting to learn. We'll also make it easier for students to learn IT and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (or STEM) courses that will prepare them for the digital economy.

- Support to **expand the use of local libraries and community centres** to provide personal digital skills support.
- **Improve digital skills and STEM training** in WA schools.
- Continue existing **cyber security and online scams awareness** programs.
- **Develop courses** to support the development of **digital skills** through TAFE.



Design

Technology, websites, and apps that are inclusively designed for everyone's use.

Everyone, regardless of age, ability, or background should be able to access and use websites and apps. The WA Government will support this vision by making our services easier to use and more accessible for everyone. This includes support for people to access services online. We'll also explore ways we can promote more inclusive technology and services beyond government.

- Migrate more agencies to **WA.gov.au** so that government information is inclusively designed and available in one place.
- Review government online services for **better accessibility**.
- Improve access to **historical information** relating to Aboriginal Western Australians.
- Improve access to **public health services** through the establishment of partnerships with Aboriginal Medical Services in regional WA.
- Promote practices that make technology **more inclusive for people with disability**.
- Enable people to digitally track their WA Health public **outpatient appointments and referrals** at all Western Australian Health sites.



Empowering Western Australians

We want to ensure our initiatives particularly aim to support Western Australians most likely to be left behind by the digital divide.

People with disability

Access to technology and online services that are inclusively designed



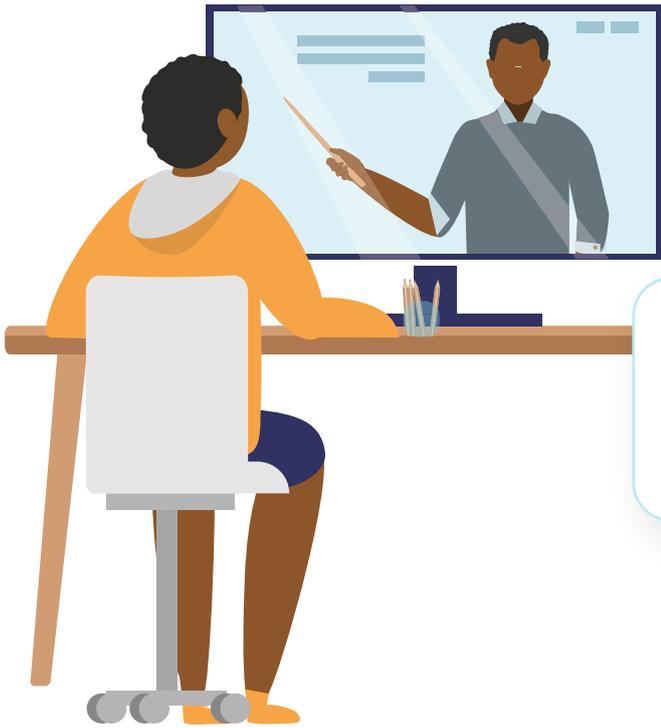
People living in regional and remote communities

Quality and affordable internet services

Older people

Training resources on how to use technology, websites, and apps safely





People living on low income

Safe access to affordable technology and internet services, websites, and apps

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, particularly refugees

Websites and apps available in different languages and support in navigating websites



Aboriginal communities

Stable and affordable internet coverage, digital skills training and service support



Digital inclusion partnerships

Government cannot improve digital inclusion alone. It must be done with committed partners who understand the issue and want to help.

There is a lot of great work happening to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

A more coordinated and planned approach is required to achieve our vision for all Western Australians to be digitally included.

Digital inclusion partnerships will be key to delivering the Blueprint.

The WA Government will work collaboratively with industry and WA communities to deliver the Blueprint and our program of initiatives that help make our state more digitally inclusive.



For example, local libraries and community resource centres deliver digital inclusion support to their communities by providing convenient access to computers, the internet and in some areas digital skills training.

However, they require more resources, and coordination with other initiatives, to sustain this work in addition to the already important services they provide.



The WA Government

The WA Government will lead and coordinate the improvement of digital inclusion. We'll do this by coordinating the delivery of the Blueprint and opportunities that drive collaboration amongst digital inclusion partners through the Office of Digital Government. We'll also support partners to deliver the solutions that are right for their community.

Industry

Industry develops many of the innovations that make it easier for more people to be digitally included. Many organisations also invest in initiatives that support digital inclusion. We'll work with key industry players to understand what more can be done, how we can share what works and where support is needed.



Community services and libraries

Community services and libraries understand the cultural, economic and social issues of the communities they serve. They provide front line support to people most likely to be left behind by digital technologies. We'll work with community services and libraries to ensure they have the necessary resources to help people access and use digital technologies. We'll also explore opportunities to collaborate on new initiatives that better support their clients to be digitally included.

WA communities

Not all communities are the same and each one faces its own unique issues and challenges. We'll make sure that WA communities' voices are heard so we can understand what needs to be done, and co-design initiatives to improve digital inclusion for them.



How we'll get there

It will take time for us to develop and deliver the approach described in this Blueprint.

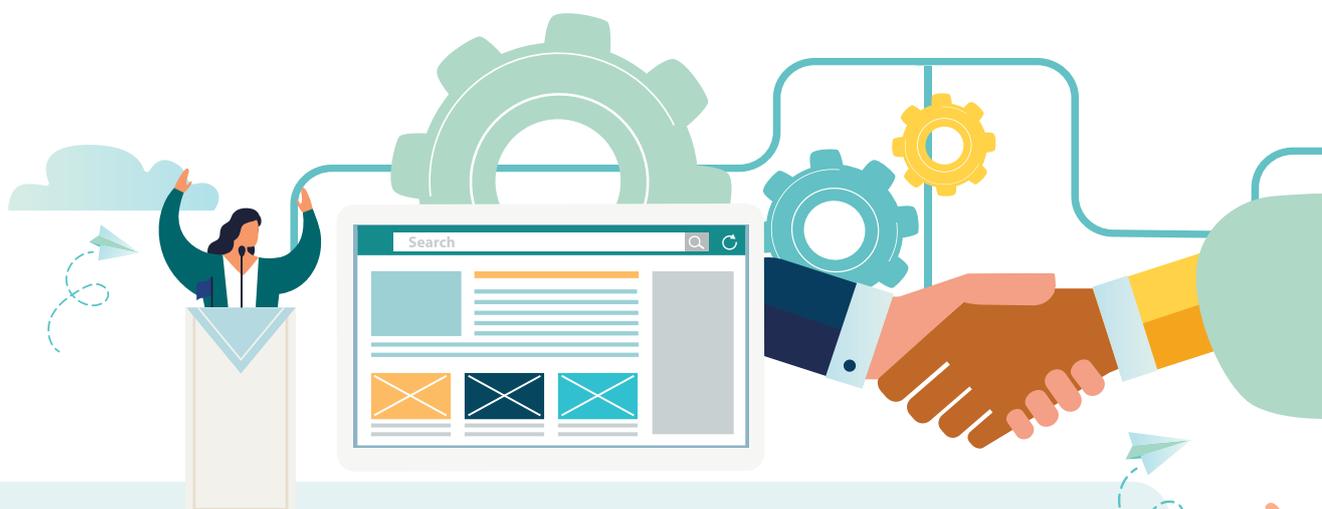
Our first steps:

- establish a partnership framework to secure high level commitment and collaboration from digital inclusion partners on the vision and priorities of the Blueprint; and
- begin implementing the initiative program.

These initial steps provide the foundation support for individual and collective action.

There is no one size fits all for improving digital inclusion. Through collaboration and co-design with our partners, we'll be in a position to deliver scalable pilots of our initiatives to test their success and suitability for supporting different communities. These pilots will be measured and monitored for success through the partnership framework to determine how and whether they can be progressed further.

Digital inclusion partners will be encouraged to seek respectful and meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities in order to build effective relationships and deliver co-designed initiatives.



Government leadership

To lead, plan and coordinate initiatives, drive collaboration amongst digital inclusion partners, and support existing programs where we can.

Digital inclusion partnership framework

To provide the architecture and governance that develops meaningful relationships amongst digital inclusion partners.

Initiatives program reporting

To provide transparency on the progress with the implementation of the initiatives program through the Digital Strategy Roadmap.



How we'll know it's working

We'll know our Blueprint is effective by focusing on:

Listening to our partners

We rely on our partners to stay engaged and passionate about improving digital inclusion. We'll know our Blueprint is working if these partnerships are delivering outcomes.



Listening to the community

We aim to deliver initiatives that support the people who are facing barriers to digital inclusion. Listening to feedback from Western Australians who use the supports we provide will tell us what is working and what doesn't.

Analysing research

There is a lot of research and expertise on the digital divide and what barriers exist for different people and communities in WA. The annual Australian Digital Inclusion Index and other detailed case studies are good example of this. We'll be watching closely to see how WA and its communities compare nationally in benchmark studies and where and how significant divides still occur.



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