MEDICI
Mapping Digital Inclusion

Mapping the Evolving Digital Inclusion landscape to support Cohesion and Integration

TRANSFERABILITY TOOLKIT
SECTION 4: SUPPORT AND ASSESSMENT

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SUMMARY

The MEDICI Transferability Toolkit aims to help stakeholders working in the field of digital inclusion for vulnerable groups apply the good practices in the MEDICI Catalogue to design and implement effective interventions to support digital inclusion. It is essentially a 'User Manual' – or 'Handbook' - that provides Guidelines, procedures, tools and practice examples to support the successful transferability and implementation of the MEDICI good practices within organisations who work with vulnerable groups.

The Toolkit approach is based on 'Ten Steps to Transferability' each of which takes the reader through the process of developing and customizing the digital inclusion project to suit local needs, from familiarization with the good practice cases contained in the MEDICI Catalogue, through adaptation and customisation to evaluation and sustainability.

Ten Steps to Transferability

Each step involves a 'primary task' which in turn links to activities that are required to complete the task. To support Toolkit users in completing the task each step provides:

- guiding principles to perform the task;

- a checklist of activities to be carried out;

- pitfalls and trouble-shooting tips, including good practice examples of how to carry out the task and activities successfully;

- list of resources (from the 'Resources' folder on website) to support the task and activities.

The ten steps are incorporated into five sections (chapters). The section you are about to read, entitled **Support and Assessment,** is made up of two steps:

Step 7: **Mentoring and Support**

Step 8: **Assessing and Accrediting Participation**

SECTION 4: SUPPORT AND ASSESSMENT

Step 7: Mentoring and Support

Primary Task of this Step

The primary task of this step is to identify the mentoring and support needs of vulnerable people participating in the digital inclusion project, and to select the appropriate support needed and to deliver it.

Guiding Principles

- It is important that the people providing mentoring and support to vulnerable people in the digital inclusion project (e.g. social service personnel, trainers) are selected on the basis of having good emotional intelligence skills;

- Mentors and support workers need to understand and respond effectively to the frequently changing mood of the group and evolving group dynamics;

- They need to work effectively with "natural group leaders" within the target group in order to keep motivation high;

- A key task in mentoring and support is to shift the perception of the project offer from top-down to bottom-up by tailoring activities to people's expressed interests and/or no interests;

- It is important to make participants the "protagonists" of their participation experience, thus addressing the tendency of vulnerable people to resist 'top-down' interventions imposed on them from above;

- The project needs to adapt constantly to keep pace with the changing moods and needs of participants.

Checklist of actions

Action	
Selection of project delivery personnel	☐
Training of project delivery personnel	☐
Team building between delivery personnel and group and within group	☐
Trust building between and within group	☐
Identify problem & solution through "service design" methodology	☐
Identify group leaders and work with them	☐
Technical and pastoral support to participants	☐

Tools to help you deliver mentoring and support.

Understanding the needs of the target group

Our research shows that participants in digital inclusion projects are characterised by multiple and complex needs. However, a common pattern is that vulnerable groups – particularly disadvantaged young people - show resistance to interventions offered to them in a top-down manner.
They tend to distrust people – for example trainers - they are not familiar with and need time to build a level of trust that makes it possible to work with them in a meaningful way.
They need to be encouraged to try new activities.

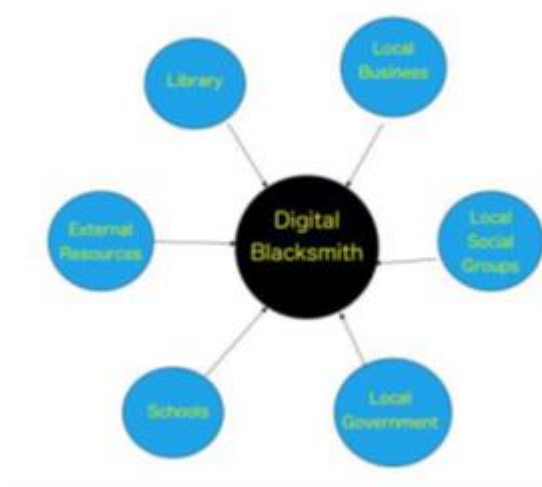In general, we found that vulnerable people require three types of support:

- **Learning and developmental support:** providing help to enable participating people to tailor interventions to suit their background and needs, and to develop at their own pace;

- **Technical support:** providing help regarding specific problems with technical platforms and tools – the evidence shows that people who are digitally excluded tend to have low levels of confidence in their digital skills and high levels of 'shame' around not being able to use digital tools;

- **Pastoral Support:** providing information, advice and guidance. The aim of pastoral support is to identify any concerns or issues around an intervention at the earliest possible opportunity and remove any barriers to digital inclusion which may be preventing participants from participating fully in the project. This fundamentally means developing positive relationships with them; responding as quickly as possible to any issues and ensuring that difficulties are discussed and resolved in the best possible way.

Below please find example of cases of each type of support:

Providing learning and development support

Arran Digital Blacksmith https://digitalinclusion.eu/digital-map/936

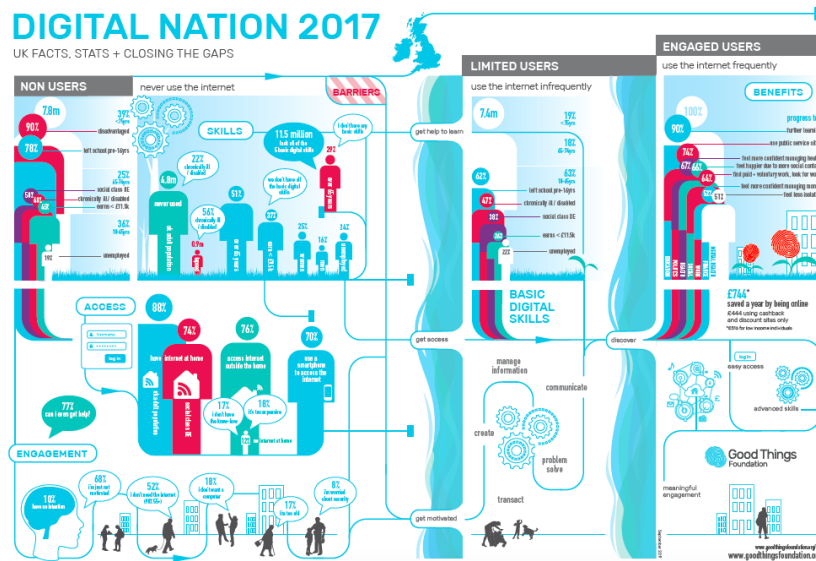Website: https://connectivistdotblog.wordpress.com/2020/06/16/arran-digital-blacksmith/

Arran Digital Blacksmith
Emulating the important community role of traditional blacksmiths, the Digital Blacksmith (DB) is a community skills hub, designed to facilitate the application of digital technology for benefit of the local economy and society - seeding and supporting the development of digital skills. DB staff combine personal communication and digital skills, to help bridge the gap between technology/resources and local needs /opportunities.

Digital Blacksmith aims to:

- Enable businesses to fully exploit the potential of digital tech
- Achieve sustainable growth and effective delivery of their products and services to customers
- Assist a full range of people in accessing services of all kinds regardless of where they live
- Create interest and excitement amongst young people about the sorts of careers that digital skills might open up for them within their local community.

Good Things Foundation and Talk Talk for Everyone

Source: https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/research-publications/digital-nation-2017

Talk Talk for Everyone https://digitalinclusion.eu/digital-map/1019

Website: https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/projects/helping-vulnerable-people-start-and-stay-safe-online

Good Things Foundation partnered with TalkTalk to digitally support vulnerable people in some of the most deprived wards across the UK. From August 2017 through to July 2018 24 Online Centres helped over 1200 people in their communities learn to stay safe online and improve their digital capability. Homeless people, families in poverty, and people with poor mental health were among those who are helped through the innovative programmes run by these centres, focused on staying safe online. The programme used Good Things Foundation's online learning platform, Learn My Way, to teach people digital skills and grow their confidence. The presence of their online centres, many of which are collaborations with community organisations, are crucial to the delivery model. 12 grants of £2000 were given to external online centres to fund the work, with each centre expected to use those funds to engage with 50 people.

Providing technical support

SeniorsGoDigital: https://digitalinclusion.eu/digital-map/356
Website: http://seniorsgodigital.eu/promotional-material/

The aim of this project was to offer disadvantaged seniors opportunities to acquire, re-skill or up-skill their digital competences in order to be able to become active citizens and socially included in the digital world. They aimed to support in a systemic way active ageing, access, social inclusion, participation and personal development through the use of the digitalized learning eco-system, as well as through the e-services, e-governance, e-participation and e-communication provided in each partner country. A tool kit was designed to re-skill or up-skill seniors' digital competences to guarantee their activeness, social presence, e-governance, e-access, e-participation and personal development. 'One stop support centres' were piloted in partner countries, both online and in-house, offering various innovative, targeted and high quality lifelong learning opportunities for the acquisition of digital skills and competences. The direct target group was adults 60+ (seniors) who were retired, unemployed, marginalised, in rural areas, with few opportunities, low-skilled etc. The indirect target group were adult educators and related organisations in the field of adult education such as NGOs, VET centres etc.

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Providing pastoral support

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Neo Fundao https://digitalinclusion.eu/digital-map/943/
Website: http://www.notaexito.com/neo

Image source: http://www.notaexito.com/neo

The NEO FUNDÃO Online Tutoring Program is part of the local strategy to combat school failure, supported by European and national funds. The project is being implemented by Nota Êxito, Lda. and the Municipality of Fundão - a city in the countryside of Portugal.

Through this project, since 2017, dozens of teachers, principals of public schools and about 250 parents have received training about the use and the potentialities of technology in education, and about 120 children from 3rd to 6th grade have received tutorial individual online support classes in the disciplines of Mathematics and Portuguese language. It is based on the personalized use of an interactive computer platform, already tested with positive results. This online and individual live support teaching system (through real-time video-conferencing) allows the use of innovative methodologies and materials / pedagogy, based on the use of ICT and the promotion of active student action in its teaching-learning process, allowing also the monitoring of this process by other stakeholders, such as teachers and parents. Tutors lead the use of the platform and improve it with use in conjunction with the students.

Pitfalls and how to survive them

- Difficulty in accessing the target group. This challenge is a general problem in working with vulnerable people, and particularly marginalised young people, because of issues around trust, credibility, past negative experiences of participating in support projects. It is sometimes compounded by 'operational' challenges – for example getting consent from people with cognitive or learning issues. Significant work needs to put into building credibility and trust in the project – for example by recruiting role models and mentors who are looked up to by participating vulnerable people. This also needs to be supported by networking - strengthening the delivery organisation's network of partners at local level and reassuring them about the "safe" nature of the activities proposed by the project.

- Difficulty in engaging the target group. It's one thing to recruit people, but it's another to retain their interest, motivation and active collaboration. Strategies to achieve this include: trust and Team Building activities; shifting the project focus from a top-down

training offer to a bottom-up learning opportunity, for example in a digital skills training project; the use of a 'design thinking' and 'service design' methodology for problem and solution identification; constant and adaptive pastoral activities.

Resources

- Anniken Sand, City of Oslo Alcohol and Drug Addiction service Competence Centre, Working with young people at risk a Practical Manual 2011
- EIF Mentoring Guidelines 2017
- IN-EDU Project: https://digitalinclusion.eu/in-edu/

Step 8: Assessing and accrediting participation

Primary Task of this Step

The primary task of this step is to think about and make decisions on the best way of recognizing and rewarding people's participation in a digital inclusion project – especially projects that involve acquiring new skills - and acknowledging the contribution it has made to their development.

Guiding Principles

- The issues of development and learning outcomes and accreditation are very complex and need to reflect the diversity of the project target groups as well as the relative diversity of the development experience that a wide range of digital inclusion projects have the potential to provide for different target groups in different implementation contexts

- For these reasons, assessment and accreditation needs to be shaped by the objectives of the project and its expected outcomes. These objectives and outcomes may be quite 'formal'. For example, digital skills training projects are often linked to formal recognised standards and qualifications – like the EU Digital Competence Framework for Citizens – DigComp – or the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). Other projects may have more informal and more flexible objectives. Rather than providing strictly formal training – or even informal learning –some projects can be defined primarily as 'empowerment' interventions, whose main purpose is to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which vulnerable people can broaden their digital horizons

- For these more informal interventions, assessment of development and learning should involve self-assessment, based on guided self-reflection of participants, rather than external or 'objective' assessment based on 'testing' procedure

- For self-assessment to be effective, project participants need to be involved in decisions about how this definition is operationalised in practice within the project, for example through 'self-evaluation' and 'self-appraisal'

- Equally, accreditation of progress and achievement needs to be flexible, reflecting the context of project delivery and the needs and wishes of project participants.

Checklist of actions

Review the project's objectives and expected outcomes and decide whether there is a need for more formal assessment and accreditation of participant involvement	☐
Work with the target group to establish their expectations of development and/or learning outcomes, using a 'co-creation' workshop approach	☐
Collaboratively explore innovative ways in which individual and group achievements can be captured and recognised	☐
Produce a plan to make sure progress and achievement is regularly monitored and reflected on as the project progresses	☐

Establish whether a more formal recognition of participation and achievement ☐
– such as a certificate of attendance - would be welcomed by project
participants at the end of the project

Put procedures in place to implement any certification that has been agreed ☐
with participants

Tools for assessment and accreditation

Guidelines for good practice in self-assessment

Source: Boud (1995)

The illustration shows a guideline for good practice in self-assessment. It represents some of the most important aspects of self-assessment, starting from motive and purpose and highlighting that it aims at promoting participants' self-directed learning.

A key principle in the Guidelines is the adoption of shared ownership of and shared responsibility for designing the assessment process and carrying it out. This means that learning, mentoring and support teams need to work with participants to develop and deliver a common approach

A key component of the Guidelines is peer feedback. Peer Feedback is essential to ensure that the participant voice is reflected in how the project is implemented, and how it makes adjustments in its implementation plan if there are problems and challenges that need to be addressed. One useful tool for Peer Feedback is Group Discussions. These provide space for participants to regularly review and reflect on how the project is progressing, issues and problems that need to be addressed and what changes need to be made. These groups need to be highly interactive and democratic, with steps taken to ensure that everyone has a voice.

Simple Self-assessment Tool

	"I" statements	Y - N
1	I feel more empowered at the end of project	
2	I am more confident with using digital platforms and tools	
3	I feel better engaged in the digital economy and society	
4	I have a more positive attitude (feel more open) to using digital tools and platforms	
5	I have a stronger voice	
6	I am able to use digital tools to access online services, look for jobs, get involved in social activities and similar activities	
7	I have a stronger sense of my own independence	

Applying the principle that project participants should be empowered to make their own judgements about their learning outcomes the example above shows a simple self-assessment tool consisting of seven 'I' statements relating to digital life. The participant answers 'Yes' or 'No' to each statement to provide an overview of their learning outcomes. A more elaborated version could include Likert-type scales as measures of outcomes to replace the simple 'Yes/No' dichotomy – e.g. a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 5 is 'strongly agree'.

Some innovative tools to capture and reflect development and learning outcomes

There are a range of collaborative assessment tools available that are managed by the participant and can be used to show progress and outcomes.

Source: teachthought.com	*Personal blogs* –online blogs help participants to share their experiences of the project and how they are developing, as well as contributing to improving digital confidence '*Quiz Tools'* – like 'Kahoot' or 'Socrative' are a fun way of exploring together what has been learned *Interactive Game* –gamification can increase motivation to use digital tools as well as indicate progress *Learning portfolios* – help participants to put together a history of their involvement and showcase their achievements

Accreditation

Because digital inclusion projects cover a wide spectrum of possible contexts, there is no simple or single accreditation route that MEDIC can recommend. As noted above, more formal projects should review existing accreditation routes for digital inclusion – like ECDL. For more informal projects certification can be tailored to the specific project context

Pitfalls and how to survive them

- Giving the impression that assessment is a form of punishment. People – especially those who are vulnerable – get anxious about doing 'tests' and can sometimes feel they are being punished. Assessment should be communicated to participants as a valuable tool for learning, rather than an 'examination'.

- Choosing the appropriate form of assessment and accreditation to suit the needs of the target group and the project objectives. If the main objective is to improve the target group's employment opportunities, then a more formal assessment and accreditation approach – leading to a recognised qualification – is desirable. If the main objective is to improve access to online public services, then the focus of the assessment should be on helping the target group to understand where their strengths are and what gaps need to be addressed.

- Not taking account of the presenting needs of vulnerable people. Assessments should be geared to the circumstances and characteristics of vulnerable people. For example, assessment for migrants needs to consider language difficulties that may compromise participants' ability to understand what is required from an assessment.

- When using self-assessment, a participant's inability to be realistic about own their achievements can lead to overestimation or underestimation of achievements. It is the job of support teams to provide guidance to participants, so they become aware of how they are doing in relation to their personal development goals.

- Not recording achievements over time. Especially when digital inclusion projects are the focal point for a broader aim of increasing the social inclusion of vulnerable people, getting participants to develop their own way of capturing their participation – for example through a blog or a portfolio – is not only a good way of doing self-assessment but is a good platform for helping excluded people to transition to further education or employment.

Resources

- Michael Wride, Guide to Self-Assessment Academic Practice, University of Dublin Trinity College 2017
- Dr. Michael Wu, Phd Gamification Done Right - The Do's And Don'ts, 2015
- JISC- Effective Assessment in a digital age https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/designing-learning-andassessment...digital.../assessment