Digital Inclusion Report

City of Belfast

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City of Belfast
Digital Inclusion Report

It is evident in our work across Maine that the need for Digital Training and Literacy is a growing and important way to invest in both your businesses and community members. A deeper understanding of what is technologically possible to do when you have a broadband connection, including distance learning education, telehealth, telecommuting, cloud-based services and software availability begins the process of developing and implementing a Digital Literacy plan for a community, as the City of Belfast's needs are assessed.

While much of the Community Technology Plan is about how to better connect communities to the internet, this part of our report deals with what you do *once you have connectivity.* The structure of this report is intended to walk you through four major themes:

- ✓ Aging in Place
- ✓ Tourism
- ✓ Business Growth & Support
- ✓ Residential Resources

Taken one at a time, or simultaneously these programs are an investment in the citizens of the community and enhances connectivity effort such as what is being contemplated by the City of Belfast.

Benefits include:

- Higher Take-rates, as people understand the value of an internet connection to their lives, they are more likely to take service
- Reduces barriers to adoption and helps community members access learning tools for increased on-line presence
- People with service are more likely to upgrade service, again increasing the viability of a project being successful
- Helps businesses understand how to leverage on-line tools and cloud services to add value and productivity to their business
- Helps individual community members access life enhancing content, including e commerce, telemedicine services and educational opportunities
- Bridges the Digital Divide, helping teach disadvantaged members of the community to participate in what is increasingly an on-line world.

> *By removing barriers and exposing people and businesses to educational opportunities that improves their understanding of on-line benefits Axiom believes we can change the economic status of a region*

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Aging in Place

Belfast, with a population of 6,668 residents, has a median age of 46.9; 46.1% of Belfast's population is over 50 years and 16% are over 70 years old, per the 2010 American Census Survey. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF

The City of Belfast has identified itself as an "Age-Friendly City". http://www.makinglifebettertogether.com/age-friendly The Belfast City Council, with the support of Belfast Strategic Partnership, are "committed to coordinate and lead the development of a positive ageing campaign through the development of positive and diverse images, a community awareness campaign and a yearly calendar of events". Their vision is that "Belfast will be a city where older people live life to the full". An "Age-friendly Belfast Plan" was developed for 2014-2017. http://www.makinglifebettertogether.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Age-friendly-Plan-April-2014-PDF.pdf

The City of Belfast might consider exploring technology tools and offering classes and workshops that will assist their residents in remaining in their homes as they become older. Current technology programs available are medication reminders; pill dispensers; health management (monitor blood pressure, pulse, heartbeat, blood glucose levels); nutrition guides; fitness tools; and brain games. Also available are home monitoring systems; personal emergency response systems; and GPS tracking systems.

A study on the aging economy was completed by the Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, and presented at the Blaine House Conference on Aging in September 2006.

The report, "Maine's Aging Economy and the Economy of Aging" http://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/data/issuebriefdemographics.pdf stated, *"that within Maine, the growth in Maine's elderly population will not occur evenly, with the result that some parts of Maine will be distinctly "older" than others. In the critical decade between 2010 and 2020, the fastest growing counties for a growing elderly population will be the coastal counties from York through Knox."*

Axiom Education & Training Center's "National Digital Equity Center" (NDEC) can provide training to the City of Belfast's senior population and to family members to leverage available technologies. NDEC can provide the community with trained educators to teach seniors, caregiver alliances or remote classes for family caregivers. The senior citizen and the family member can learn firsthand how to use the online monitoring systems or even use something as basic as an iPad for communicating and visual check-ins. Patients can connect to providers for care and support via videoconference (telehealth), as well as including family members to actively participate in the care of a loved one.

Collaborating partners to consider are:
- Belfast Strategic Partnership www.makinglifebettertogether.com
- Spectrum Generations www.spectrumgenerations.org
- Eastern Area Agency on Aging http://www.eaaa.org
- Home Support Services www.callhomesupport.com
- Waldo County General Hospital https://mainehealth.org/waldo-county-general-hospital
- Hospice Volunteers of Waldo County www.hospicevolunteersofwaldocounty.org
- Maine AARP Age-Friendly Communities Program https://states.aarp.org/maine-leads-nation-towns-join-age-friendly-network

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Tourism

The City of Belfast is a year-round vibrant community that is open to anyone that comes to visit or lives there. Belfast welcomes over 10,000 tourists each year and is known as a "hip coastal town" that is family-friendly and affordable for summer vacations. There is the unspoiled beauty of lakes and beaches, and a beautiful harbor. Hiking, boating, bicycle riding are among the many activities the region offers. The downtown boasts of many restaurants, pubs and local shops and galleries.

The City of Belfast might consider exploring technology tools by offering classes and workshops that will assist businesses and residents in promoting tourism.

Axiom Education & Training Center's "National Digital Equity Center" (NDEC) can train the City of Belfast's businesses and interested community members to leverage available technologies to increase and promote the region's tourism industry. NDEC can provide the community with trained educators. Businesses and community members can learn firsthand how to create and update websites, leverage the power of social media, as well as utilize apps for walking tours and points of interest.

Collaborating partners to consider are:

- Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce https://www.belfastmaine.org
- Our Town Belfast https://ourtownbelfast.org
- Maine Invites You https://www.mainetourism.com/places/mid-coast

Business Growth and Support

The City of Belfast has approximately 409 businesses, representing approximately 6,138 employees. http://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/qcew1.html

With 46.1% population of residents over 50 years of age, it is important to focus on business growth, development and sustainability that can attract and keep a younger population.

Axiom Education & Training Center's "National Digital Equity Center" (NDEC) can organize training for the City of Belfast's businesses to leverage available technologies and industry specific instruction. NDEC can provide the community with educators to hold classes, as well as collaborate with local organizations to provide training. The business and community members can learn firsthand how to create and update websites, increase technical proficiency and industry specific knowledge.

Websites and Domain Email
In Maine and across the United States, 55% of businesses do not have a website. Belfast businesses responded that 89% have a website and 45% stated that they are interested in receiving Social Media training including FaceBook, Twitter, Skype and Instagram. NDEC can work with the City of Belfast's businesses to provide Website and Social Media program training to the region's business community.

Collaborating partners to consider are:

- Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce https://www.belfastmaine.org
- Our Town Belfast https://ourtownbelfast.org/business

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- Maine Small Business Development Centers www.mainesbdc.org
- Welcome ME (Customer Service Training) www.welcomemetraining.com
- Foster Center for Student Innovation https://umaine.edu/innovation
- Maine Small Business Development Centers www.main esbdc.org
- Top Gun Entrepreneurship Acceleration www.mced.biz/programs-services/top-gun-program

Residential

The City of Belfast might offering classes/workshops to their residents to better understand the benefits of robust internet. Increased broadband usage will drive take-rate, increasing broadband demand, and will open up new on-line opportunities. Workshops to consider are listed below:

Aging in Place

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Cutting the Cord

Cord cutting refers to the process of cutting expensive cable connections and receiving your phone and television content through your internet connection. This is possible when levels of service allow a subscriber to purchase enough internet to cancel traditional phone and cable subscriptions. Typically, buying your content through streaming services allows you to save significantly on your bill by purchasing only what you would like to watch. Popular video-streaming programs include Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Sling TV and YouTube.

Some of the advantages of cord cutting include:

- Saves money
- Avoids subscription to undesired channels
- Advertising is minimal
- Purchasing a phone connection commonly r to as VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)

Distance Learning Education

Distance learning, also called distance education, e-learning, and online learning, form of education which the main elements include physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication. Distance learning traditionally has focused on nontraditional students, such as full-time workers, stay-at-home Moms, small businesses, including home-based businesses, as well as military personnel, and nonresidents or individuals in remote regions who are unable to attend classroom lectures.

Smart Homes

Home security systems are becoming easy to install and many systems run directly from a wireless link that you can control on your smartphone or a computer in your home. Long gone are the days of complicated wiring and professional installation is almost a thing of the past. Smart Home technology continues to evolve and is a catch all phrase for remote access and control of a variety of major and not so critical functions in your home. Including security cameras, electronic door locks and garage openers, thermostat control, Amazon Echo, Google Home, light switches, your coffee maker and refrigerator... with the list getting longer every day.

Digital Literacy

Based on the survey results, the residents of the City of Belfast are very interested in taking digital classes and improving their computer skills. Included in this report is a digital literacy plan for the City of Belfast.

Surveys, Interviews and Meeting Results

Axiom interviewed businesses, community and municipal leaders, as well as residents to discuss Computer Skills/Digital Literacy Training and workforce development skills training.

Business

For the business community, an online survey was distributed by the City of Belfast Broadband Committee. A total of 108 businesses responded to the survey and/or interviews. (See Addendum 1 – City of Belfast Business Survey Results)

Business Survey Results:

- 95% of businesses state that broadband is extremely important for their business
- 39% state that the use the internet for online sales; 69% use file or data sharing; 77% use data management, backup or data storage; 64% use operations in the cloud; 65% use the internet for social media
- 11% of businesses are sole entrepreneurs; 33% have 2-5 employees; 16% have 6-10 employees; 12% have 11-25 employees; and 27% have over 26 employees
- 50% of businesses state that internet speeds have not kept up with business needs over the past few years
- 70% of owners or employees work remotely or from another location
- Businesses state that the following would most improve their business- 34% could work or sell more efficiently online; 16% if their employees were better trained; 43% if they understood and could implement the latest online tools; 33% if they had updated computer software; and 32% if their pool of skilled employees increased
- 79% state they are using cloud-based services, and 75% are interested in using cloud-based services
- 50% of businesses see a need for computer skills training

Residential

As with Business, Community & Municipal leaders, the residential community was invited to participate in a Community Broadband Survey by the City of Belfast Broadband Team. It was the goal of the survey for residents to become engaged in providing better broadband to the town. A total of 496 residents completed the survey.

Community Survey Results:

- 97% have an internet connection
- 57% of homes have internet bundled service (along with phone or cable TV)
- 56% have a monthly cost of $40-79.99 for their internet connection
- 60% would like internet for internet television; 22% for VoIP; 15% for Home Security; 8% for Home Automation; 10% for Video-conferencing
- 73% have someone in the household that works from home or telecommutes for their job; 54% of homes state that they are frustrated with their current internet service provider

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- 75% state they have children or adults that use the internet for homework – 14 are children and 61% are adults
- 38% of residents are interested in computer class training
- In ranking their provider from 1-100 (with 1 being the worst and 100 being the best)
  - Speed: 57%
  - Reliability: 65%
  - Cost: 44%
  - Customer service: 54%

Community & Municipal Leaders – It is evident in our work across Maine and the surveys in your community that the need for Digital Training and Literacy is a growing and important way to invest in both your businesses and community members. A deeper understanding of what is technologically possible to do when you have a broadband connection, including distance learning education, telehealth, telecommuting, cloud-based services and software availability begins the process of developing and implementing a Digital Literacy plan for a community, as the community needs are assessed.

What is Digital Inclusion?

Digital inclusion is a national priority in the United States, and increasingly a priority in Maine. High-speed Internet access is widely recognized as a necessity for full participation in today's society. Employers, educators, businesses, healthcare providers, and civic institutions expect people to have access to computers and broadband connectivity. However, accessible, reliable, and affordable broadband service continues to be out of reach for millions of Americans, many of whom live in low-income households. This gap in adoption of high-speed Internet and the lack of skills needed to use broadband-enabled tools in meaningful ways continue to be significant problems that policymakers, researchers, and practitioners need to focus on in the United States and in Maine.

The Digital Inclusion Program for the City of Belfast includes four components:

1. Affordable Internet – Cost continues to be a major barrier to broadband adoption. The City of Belfast should consider addressing "ability to pay". The following providers have been contacted regarding low-cost broadband availability:

- Consolidated Communications (FairPoint Communications):
  - Eligible low-income Consolidated Communication residential customers can quality for a discount on qualified internet service at their primary residence under the Lifeline Program. The discount consists of federal monthly support of $9.25.

  - Eligible Consolidated residential customers residing on tribal lands may qualify for an additional federal discount of up to $25 per month and installation assistance.

  - Further information, including applications forms, can be found at: www.fairpoint.com/home/residential/phone/lifeline.html

- Charter Communications (formerly Time Warner Cable):
    - Charter offers "Spectrum Internet Access", which is a low-cost broadband offering. www.SpectrumInternetAssist.com.

    - Plan includes:
        - $14.99 for 30/4 Mbps with no data caps
        - Internet Modem Included
        - No Contracts Required
        - Add in-home WiFi for $5.00 more per month
        - Customers must not have been a Charter Communications subscriber within 60 days of signing up for Spectrum Internet Assist.
    - Eligibility requires participation in one of the following:
        - National School Lunch Program (NSLP); free or reduced cost lunch
        - Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of NSLP
        - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (>age 65 only)
        - Residents may visit Charter Communication's website or call 844-525-1574 to determine eligibility

- City of Belfast Technology Fund: A fund ~could~ be established to offer a discount to low-income families to address broadband adoption and take-rate
    - Axiom is working with the Broadband Committee to determine the feasibility of establishing a fund

2. Affordable Equipment Assessment – Low-cost or free computers are often just as important as having access to low-cost or free Internet options, particularly for people in low-income communities.

- PC's for Maine www.pcsformaine.org offers refurbished, older computers that are donated by businesses in Maine and are available to low-income families.

- PC's for Maine will consider installing a kiosk at a local business to sell low-cost computers locally. Axiom would be happy to work with a local business and facilitate a conversation with PC's for Maine, should the City of Belfast decide to move forward.

- Goodwill's "Good Tech" program offers refurbished, used computers to low-income residents. https://goodwillnne.org/stores/goodtech

- Lending Library of Devices, laptops, desktops, iPads, etc., could be established for residents to borrow on an "as-needed" basis. The devices might be donated or the City of Belfast could seek grant funds to purchase equipment.

3. Digital Literacy Training* – Computer Skills Training /Digital Literacy Training plays a critical role in technology and workforce development training.

- Axiom Education & Training Center's National Digital Equity Center offer Digital Literacy classes for residents and businesses, and would be pleased to organize a Digital Literacy Program. The program will collaborate with Adult & Community Education programs, the region's CareerCenters, and local community programs. Digital Literacy classes have been

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held in the past 1-2 years at the Belfast Free Library by AETC, in collaboration with the Unity Foundation and UniTel. Approximately 116 residents of the City of Belfast participated in the classes.

- Belfast Adult Education, http://belfast.maineadulted.org, serves the City of Belfast at the Learning Center, as well as the surrounding communities. Belfast Adult Education offers computer skills classes, including Introduction to Computers, Microsoft Word and Excel, etc., as well as online courses through Ed2Go. Computers and laptops are available in the computer lab at the Learning Center for student use. The public may use the computers and laptops, if available.

  A list of classes is available at:
  http://belfast.siteturbine.com/uploaded_files/belfast.maineadulted.org/files/BROCHURE_SPRING_2018.pdf

- Maine Dept. of Labor's CareerCenter, www.mainecareercenter.gov is located in Brunswick and Lewiston and is committed to assist with workforce development skills efforts.

In rural communities, time, distance, travel is a barrier to educational attainment; holding classes that are in accessible locations that are familiar and not intimidating will increase participation and are geographically spread out throughout the designated service ensure strong, widespread participation and good, measurable impacts.

Recommended Class Locations:
- City of Belfast Town Hall
- Belfast Free Library
- Business Locations

Recommended Classes include:
- Introduction to Computer
- Windows 7, 8, 10
- Internet Safety
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft Outlook
- Microsoft Publisher
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- QuickBooks
- PhotoShop
- Social Media including FaceBook for Business & Individuals, Twitter, etc.
- WordPress
- Video Streaming
- iPad
- Gmail
- Google Docs, etc.
- Targeted classes:
  - Aging in Place
  - Tourism
  - Business Growth and Support

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- Websites, Social Media and Domain Email
- Cutting the Cord
- How to have a Smart House
- Accessing Distance Learning Education

See pricing below

Axiom will work with the City of Belfast to pursue funding for digital literacy classes for residents and businesses.

4. Public Computer Access – Increasing Public Access Computing allows residents to access technology in places in which they feel comfortable and supported is essential. If a business or resident cannot afford equipment or an Internet subscription, and if broadband is not available at their location, Public Computer Access is essential.

- Belfast Free Library has 12 computers available for adult public use, and 5 computers for children and teens. Wireless internet is also available for residents and businesses with their own computer to use during library hours.

- Belfast Adult Education's Learning Center has 10 computers and 8 laptops available for student use. The public is welcome to use the computers and laptops if not in use by the students.
- Community HotSpots are open access networks that allow citizens in a downtown or other public spaces access to the Internet. This is a simple, straightforward way to help a town or region get more connected. It is an affordable, convenient way to help visitors and residents easy, seamless connectivity.

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Digital Literacy Budget

Budget (Based on 10 Students per Class)   1 (3 hr.) class/wk.
Includes:
  Teacher and/or Tutor (Fringe & Salary)
  Travel
  Survey Monkey (Annual Fee)
  Supplies
  Academic Services Group (Curriculum)
  Administration
Total Budget $ 26,000

Budget based on 1-year program, 1 (3 hr.) class per week, 10 students per class.