connectUS

Digital Skills Hub

Program Guide
for Implementation Partners

Updated May 8, 2025

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1.0 About the Digital Skills Hub

The Digital Skills Hub offers no-cost, in-person courses for Franklin County, Ohio, residents, covering essential topics like cybersecurity, Google applications, internet search skills, and more. These classes are designed to build digital confidence and expand access to opportunity in our community. After completing 10 hours of in-person training, qualifying participants take home a high-quality, large-screen device (like a Chromebook or iPad).

The Digital Skills Hub is offered by 16 community partners across Franklin County:

Advanced Technology Education Center (ATEC)	Columbus Metropolitan Library	Goodman Guild Association	National Center for Urban Solutions, TEC
Alvis	Columbus State Community College	Goodwill Columbus	National Church Residences
Central Community House	Directions for Youth and Families	Guadalupe Center - Catholic Social Services	New Directions
CLC Works	Educational Services Center of Central Ohio	Jewish Family Services	Tridestone Missionary Baptist Church

Purpose of this Program Guide

This document outlines program guidance for Implementation Partners administering the Digital Skills Hub program, including managing participant registration, tracking attendance, accessing course content, distributing devices, and ensuring consistent implementation across partners. Periodic updates will be made and provided as the program collaboratively evolves to meet the needs of participants.

Key Links & Reference Documents

- Digital Skills Hub Website
    - DSH Course Content Guide
    - ConnectUS Brand Hub and DSH Marketing Kit
- DSH Instructors Connect - Microsoft Teams channel for instructors to collaborate and communicate with each other.

2.0 Digital Skills Hub Checklists

2.1 Administrative Check List

Month 1 of the Quarter

- ☐ **Define Course Schedules & Details:** Determine the following details for each course you plan to run in the subsequent quarter (i.e., if planning in Q2, provide details for Q3 courses)
    - ○ Host Site and Address
    - ○ Course Type (open to the public vs. private enrollment)
    - ○ Instructor Name (if known)
    - ○ Dates and times of each lesson for each cohort (minimum 10 hours)
    - ○ Device Type
    - ○ Language
    - ○ Short Description (1-2 sentences about the course and who it is for)
    - ○ Max Capacity
- ☐ **Post courses via ConnectUS Resource Portal**
    - ○ *NOTE: For Q2 2025 planning, submit courses via the Course Schedule Template spreadsheet*
- ☐ **Begin Marketing:** Utilize DSH Marketing Toolkit for marketing and outreach.
- ☐ **Adapt/Update Lesson Plans**: Download and review the curriculum, making adaptations as necessary for your audience.

Month 2 of the Quarter

- ☐ **Receive Devices:** After receiving course schedules, Smart Columbus will order devices ~60 days in advance. Use **Device Receipt Procedure** to intake devices.
- ☐ **Continue Marketing:** Utilize DSH Marketing Toolkit for marketing and outreach.
- ☐ Assist Participants with Registration.
- ☐ **Continue Adapting/Updating Lesson Plans**: Download and review the curriculum, making adaptations as necessary for your audience.

Month 3 of the Quarter

- ☐ **Continue Marketing:** Utilize DSH Marketing Toolkit for marketing and outreach.
- ☐ Assist participants with registration
- ☐ **Continue Adapting/Updating Lesson Plans**: Download and review the curriculum, making adaptations as necessary for your audience.

2.2 Instructor Checklist

Before Students Arrive

- ☐ **Log in to the ConnectUS Portal**
  - ☐ Navigate to your assigned cohort and be ready to take attendance.
- ☐ **Verify Device Inventory**
  - ☐ Confirm there are enough devices on hand for the expected students.
  - ☐ Check that power strips or enough outlets are available for charging.
- ☐ **Prepare Materials**
  - ☐ Review the day's lesson plan from the DSH Course Content Guide.
  - ☐ Print and organize handouts, surveys (Pre-Course Survey), or materials.
- ☐ **Check the Tech**
  - ☐ Set up the projector and slides for the day's lesson.
    - ☐ Ensure the appropriate wires or adapters are available to connect to the projector.
  - ☐ Check that the WiFi is working and have the connection details ready.
- ☐ **Survey Setup**
  - ☐ Print or have the Pre-Course Survey links ready for students.

Student Check-In

- ☐ **Attendance Check**
  - ☐ Take attendance in the ConnectUS Porta upon student arrival.
- ☐ **Eligibility Documentation Verification**
  - ☐ Conduct a visual check of **proof of residency** and **proof of income** documents.
    - ☐ Documents must be dated within the past 12 months.
    - ☐ Record verification in the ConnectUS Portal by selecting the student and confirming eligibility.
  - ☐ For **zero-income** participants, verify supporting statements/letters.
- ☐ **Handle Walk-Ins (If Applicable)**
  - ☐ If there's space:
    - ☐ Add them to the cohort in the ConnectUS Portal.
    - ☐ Complete eligibility verification.
  - ☐ If full:
    - ☐ Assist in referring them to another course. To transfer a student, please see section 3.3.4, Referring Participants to Alternate Courses.

During Class

- ☐ **Welcome Students**
    - ☐ Introduce yourself and outline what they will learn during the lesson.
    - ☐ Set class expectations (participation, device handling, attendance).
- ☐ **Administer the Pre-Course Survey (Day 1 activity)**
    Distribute or guide students through completing the pre-course survey.
- ☐ **Deliver Lesson Content**
    - ☐ [Lesson Content](#)
    - ☐ [Supporting Materials & Activities](#)
- ☐ **Note Attendance During Each Lesson**
    - ☐ At the start of each day, record and save student attendance in the ConnectUS portal.

End of Class

- ☐ **Save Attendance Records**
    - ☐ Ensure attendance is saved in the ConnectUS system for the session.
- ☐ **Student Reminders**
    - ☐ Share expectations for future sessions.
    - ☐ Emphasize the importance of attending all sessions to receive their device.
- ☐ **Check Supplies and Prepare for Next Class**
    - ☐ Collect devices and securely store them until the next session.
    - ☐ Note any issues (technology, supplies, participant needs) to report

End of Course

- ☐ **Print Graduation Materials**
    - ☐ Graduation Certificates
    - ☐ Device Transfer Forms
        - ☐ Collect signed forms from each graduating student.
- ☐ **Complete Post-Course Surveys**
    - ☐ Print or have the Pre-Course Survey links ready for students.
- ☐ **Finalize Device Transfer**
    - ☐ Connect the device and student in the ConnectUS portal (see Device Management section for further details).

3.0 Guidelines, Processes & Procedures

3.1 Roles & Responsibilities

- **Implementation Partner**: Organization that operates Digital Skills Hub courses. Implementation partners also assist participants with the online registration, coordinate course dates, times and locations, utilize marketing materials for recruitment, and manage device procurement and storage.
- **Instructors**: Verify documentation on the first day (if necessary), track attendance, deliver content material, and manage device distribution.
- **Smart Columbus Staff**: Track registrations, verify participants' eligibility, update course rosters in implementation partner dashboards, and order devices.

3.2 Participant Eligibility

Anyone can take a Digital Skills Hub course. To receive a no-cost device, participants must not have previously received a device from the program and also meet the following criteria:

- Residency within Franklin County, Ohio
- Household income at or below the 200% of the [2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)

Residents will need to demonstrate proof of residency and income to the instructor on the first day of class. The program only allows for one device to be distributed per household, so if multiple people from the same household attend a class, **all may participate**, but **only one household member** can receive a device.

Zero-income Participants

If a participant indicates that they have zero income—meaning they have no sources of income—they must provide documentation explaining how they are supporting themselves. This could include a letter from the head of their household or a statement from an agency, which instructors can use to verify their financial status.

EXAMPLES OF QUALIFYING DOCUMENTATION

All documents must reflect the participants name and be unexpired
and/or **dated within the last 12 months**

1. A document that shows the Participants current address, located within Franklin County	2. A document that shows proof of income or participation in a qualifying program
- Ohio Driver's license, Learner's Permit or Identification Card - Utility Bill (Gas, Electric, Phone, Internet, Cable) - Bank, Credit Card or Mortgage Statement - Federal or Ohio Income Tax Return Filing - Insurance Policy Or Card - Public Assistance Benefits Statement	Household Income Documentation - W-2 Wage and Tax Statement 1099 Form - Pay Stub - Benefit Letter from Social Security - Pension Award Statement Qualifying Program Documentation - SNAP food assistance - MedicaidPublicly funded childcare - Ohio Works First (OWF) cash assistance - Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) emergency assistance - Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) - Public Housing Benefits / Section 8 Voucher - Low Income Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) - Home Energy Assistance (HEAP) - Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) - Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

Verifying & Recording Eligibility

Instructors must verify participants' eligibility to receive a device on the first day of class by completing a visual check and recording eligibility via the ConnectUS Resource Portal.

To record eligibility:

1. Log in to the ConnectUS portal.
2. Click into the Cohorts tab and select the appropriate cohort.
3. Select the appropriate learner from the cohort dropdown.
4. Scan the participant's documentation to ensure that:
   a. Their proof of residency document is dated within the last 12 months
   b. Their proof of residency document shows the participant's name and that their current address is located within Franklin County
   c. Their proof of income document matches their name and/or address.
      i. If the learner is providing a document that shows proof of income, ensure that they meet the income threshold based on their household size as outlined in the [2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines](#).
5. Click the verify eligibility button and make a selection.
6. Click confirm to verify the learner's eligibility.

Proxy Eligibility

Implementation Partners offering private courses to existing clients may utilize a proxy method for verifying eligibility. Implementation Partners must provide written documentation to Smart Columbus detailing existing program eligibility requirements that align with the criteria in the table below.

3.3 Participant Registration & Enrollment

Participants apply to the program through the online registration form located on the Digital Skills Hub website, or via paper form that the Implementation Partner enters into the online form. The form guides them to provide their information to determine eligibility for a no-cost device.

Assisting with Registration

Implementation partners are encouraged to assist participants with the registration process as needed by following these steps:

1. Open the registration form.

2. Select the option: "**I am assisting someone with registration.**"
3. Enter your information on the following page, and then help the participant complete their details.
4. Both the participant and the person assisting will receive confirmation notifications after submission.

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Columbus Metropolitan Library Offers Registration Support to All

Implementation partners can **refer prospective participants** to any **Columbus Metropolitan Library** branch for assistance with registration.

Participants do not need to ask for a specific person; however, they should mention they need help registering for the Digital Skills Hub.

For those who prefer assistance over the phone, they can call the general line at **614-645-2275**, which routes customers to the Library's call center for further support.

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Paper Applications

For participants with very limited to no digital skills, Partners can use paper registration forms. Templates:

- [Paper Registration Form_TEMPLATE](#)
- [Paper Registration Form_Spanish_TEMPLATE](#)

Instructions:

- Download the document
- Update the course schedule on Page 3
- Print and provide to prospective participants
- Upon completion and return, the Partner should use the Registration Form to enter details into the ConnectUS Portal

Referring Participants to Alternate Courses

There are two options for referring students to an alternative course:

1. If a student hasn't yet registered, a Partners can help them register on the Digital Skills Hub website.
2. If a student has already registered for a course, the instructor or support staff can transfer a student to another one of the organization's courses through the following steps:
   a. Log in to the ConnectUS Portal.
   b. Go to the cohorts tab and select the appropriate cohort.

Handling Unregistered Walk-Ins

Each instructor has the authority to determine how to handle unregistered walk-ins based on their specific classroom policies and capacity considerations. To help navigate the situation, the following process is recommended:

1. **Check Classroom Capacity:**
   - If there is available capacity, the participant may be added to the class, but the eligibility verification process must still be completed.
   - If the class is full, assist the participant in registering for an alternative course.
2. **Resources for Alternative Registration:**
   If the class is full, provide the following resources to facilitate the participant's registration for another course:
   - [Digital Skills Hub Website](#)
   - [Paper Registration Form_TEMPLATE](#) (Provide a printed copy)

If it is determined that there is sufficient room in the class to accommodate a walk-in student they can be added to the cohort by following the below steps:

1. Log in to the ConnectUS Portal.
2. Navigate to the Cohorts tab and select the appropriate cohort.
3. On the bottom of the cohort view click the "add student" button.
4. Complete the form details and click "add student."
   a. A pop-up will appear letting the user know if the addition was successful.

Over-Enrollment Practices

Based on data from previous courses, about 50% of registered participants attend and complete the program. To account for this, courses are intentionally over-enrolled, anticipating that not all registrants will participate. Before applications open, Implementation Partners should specify the maximum number of participants to cap

registrations, based on their expected attendance rate and capacity to accommodate participants.

If a session exceeds its intended capacity due to unexpectedly high attendance, instructors should:

1. **Accommodate All Attendees:** Make every effort to allow all participants to join, as they have committed time and resources to attend the course. Communicate any additional staffing or resource needs to ensure that all participants can engage without compromising the quality of instruction.

2. **Notify Smart Columbus:** Report the over-capacity situation to Smart Columbus promptly to facilitate necessary adjustments for future sessions.

3.3 Attendance Tracking

Course Attendance Tracking Process

Attendance should be taken at the start of each class and tracked within each Implementation Partner's ConnectUS system account per cohort. Below are the steps needed to do this in the ConnectUS system:

1. Log into the ConnectUS portal.
2. Click the Cohorts tab.
3. Select the appropriate cohort from the list.
4. Click the Attendance Tab and record attendance.
5. Click "Save Attendance" to record the attendance for the cohort.

Note: *Participants must complete 10 hours of coursework to receive a no-cost device.*

Make-Up Classes

If a participant misses a class, Partners should determine how to handle make-up opportunities to help the participant catch up on missed content. It is recommended to limit make-up sessions to no more than one per student. The following options are examples of arrangements used by organizations in the initial pilot program:

- **1:1 sessions:** Coordinate with the student for a convenient time, possibly even after the course ends.
- **Before/After Sessions:** Schedule make-ups right before or after the next session.
- **Group Sessions:** For multiple absentees, schedule an additional group session.
- **Asynchronous Sessions:** Provide the slide deck for self-study, with follow-up support.

- **Alternate Locations:** Allow students to attend a session at a different location, if available.

3.4 Content Delivery

Course Content Guide

Instructors can access course information and resources in the DSH Foundations Course Guide on the ConnectUS website. This content guide includes English and Spanish versions of the following resources:

- Suggested Lesson Guides
- Presentation Decks
- Printed Materials
- Pre- and Post-Course Surveys
- Certificate of Completion template
- Paper Registration Form templates
- Any additional participant resources

Preparation

- Review all content and resources before each class to become familiar with the material and ensure effective delivery.
- If changes to the content are needed, instructors should make copies of the materials to ensure the original versions in the Course Guide remain unchanged.
- Prepare and ensure all handouts and printed materials are ready before class to facilitate smooth instruction.
- **Lesson Plans** can be used as adaptable guides; instructors may modify them to align with their teaching styles and address the specific needs of their participants, as long as key topics are covered and lesson goals are achieved.
- It is highly recommended that new partners shadow an existing course to gain a clear understanding of class structure, content delivery methods, and overall program flow. The process for shadowing a course is outlined below:
    - Smart Columbus will coordinate with current partners to identify available classes for shadowing.
    - Shadowers will choose and confirm which class(es) they wish to attend.
    - Smart Columbus will notify instructors when shadowers will be present.
    - At the start of class, shadowers will introduce themselves to the instructor as observers, not participants.
    - Shadowers will observe the class and are encouraged to take notes, but they should hold any questions until after the session to prevent disruptions from the course content.

3.5 Device Management

Devices are purchased centrally through ConnectUS and sent directly to each DSH Partner based on the forecasted number of learners being taught in the upcoming quarter. Additionally, Smart Columbus maintains a limited stock of extra devices to help fill short-term inventory gaps. To request devices from Smart Columbus' stock, please reach out to the Smart Columbus team with at least 48 hours notice.

Device Ordering & Tracking Process

1. Smart Columbus collects the shipping details for each Implementation partner.
   a. Address, main point of contact name, email, and phone number.
2. Partners submit their course schedules for the upcoming quarter.
3. Smart Columbus uses the included course capacity information and device type selected to determine the total number of potential student devices needed for a partner to execute their planned courses in a given quarter.
4. Smart Columbus places the order. Once processed, a confirmation email is generated which includes the serial numbers of the devices and tracking information. Smart Columbus forwards these emails to Partners for awareness.
5. Smart Columbus enters the serial numbers for the devices into the portal and assigns them to the appropriate organization.
6. Once the shipment is received, Partners mark the device as received in the Inventory tab of the portal via the following steps:
   a. Log into the ConnectUS Portal.
   b. Click the "Inventory" tab.
   c. Use the multi-select button to select the appropriate device(s)
   d. Click the "mark as received" button to set the selected devices to a status of received.

Please note that you can use the filters to filter the list of devices down to a particular device by serial number or filter the list of devices by reception status.

Below are the two device bundles that are currently available. If you are interested in using other devices or changing the device type offered in your course, please reach out to the Smart Columbus Team.

Device	Device Specifications	Description
Apple iPad Air	● 10.9", 8GB RAM, 64GB, M1 ● AppleCare+ Extended Service Agreement - 2 years - Optional Carry-in ● ZAGG Messenger Folio 2 Keyboard and Case for Gen10 10.9" iPad	iPads combine a user-friendly interface with the power of a small laptop, allowing easy access to applications and resources via touchscreen and a physical keyboard.
Acer Chromebook	● 515 CBE595-2 - 15.6" - Intel Core 3 - 100U - 8 GB RAM - 256 GB SSD ● Logitech Wired Mouse ● Case Logic Advantage Attache Case for 15.6" Notebook - Black	General-purpose device suitable for internet browsing, digital life skills, word processing, and video calls with enough processing speed for modern usage.

Device Distribution Process

On the final day of class, instructors will distribute devices to participants who are eligible and have completed the minimum 10 hours of class time. For any individual receiving a device, they must complete a Device Distribution Form. To assign the device to the learner in the ConnectUS Portal, an instructor should complete the following steps:

1. Log in to the ConnectUS portal.
2. Select the Inventory tab
3. Use the filter menu to search for the serial number of the device being assigned.
4. Click the pencil and paper icon to edit the device record.
5. Update the assignee details, including who is assigning the learner the device and the date.
6. Save the updated record.

Device Incidents

In the event that a device is damaged, lost, or stolen, please contact the Smart Columbus team as soon as possible.

3.6 Evaluation

Smart Columbus will conduct evaluation activities to measure the program's quality and impact on participants, and to identify opportunities to improve its overall effectiveness and operational model. The aim is to gather feedback from participants, instructors, and

coordinators to ensure that our current processes and curriculum align with the needs of everyone involved in the program.

Pre- and Post-Surveys

Instructors will provide participants with pre- and post-surveys during the first and last class sessions. These surveys collect demographic data and help evaluate progress in digital skills, confidence, and overall satisfaction with the program. Completing these surveys is mandatory, as they are the primary tools used to measure the program's impact.

Surveys can be provided as printed copies from the Course Guide or accessed through the following SurveyMonkey links:

- **Pre-Course Survey:** https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WGCND5Q
- **Post-Course Survey:** https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WGCB39B

Six-Month Follow-Up Survey

Smart Columbus will follow up with participants who gave consent to be part of ongoing evaluation efforts during the initial surveys. These participants will receive a Six-Month Follow-Up Survey designed to measure the long-term impact of the program, such as whether they're continuing to use the skills they learned, how those skills have benefited them, and if they've achieved any related personal or professional goals.

To make it easy to participate, survey links will be sent directly to participants via both email and text message. As a thank-you for their time, all respondents will be entered into a prize lottery, giving them a chance to win a $25 digital gift card.

Participant Interviews

Smart Columbus will conduct interviews with participants and instructors to gather feedback on program delivery and overall experience. A select group of participants will be invited to participate and compensated with $25 digital gift cards. The interviews will be recorded for note-taking purposes, and participants will be notified of the recording in advance.

Participants can choose to conduct the interviews in person at the Smart Columbus Experience Center (170 S. Civic Center Dr.), at their course location, or virtually.

Who is contacted: Those who express interest in providing feedback during the pre- and post-surveys will be contacted. The goals of these interviews are to:

1. Understand their course experiences.
2. Learn about their personal goals, motivations, and the program's value.
3. Identify strengths and areas for program improvement.

DSH Partner Meetings with Coordinators and Instructors

On a quarterly basis, Smart Columbus will coordinate DSH Partner Meetings with program coordinators and instructors to collect feedback, collaborate on improvements, and discuss strategies to reach our collective goal of 10,000 participants as well as ongoing sustainability. These sessions are designed to review operational challenges, track progress, gather insights, and identify opportunities for improvement.

3.7 Partner Collaboration

Being part of the Digital Skills "Hub" means fostering a collaborative environment that encourages the sharing of insights and experiences to strengthen our collective impact on participants.

Microsoft Teams Instructor Channel

A Microsoft Teams group has been set up for instructors across participating organizations to communicate, share insights, and discuss topics like content delivery and classroom management. *Smart Columbus members are included*. Instructors not yet in the group can join via this link: [DSH Instructors Connect](#)

How to use the Teams group:

- Share best practices and suggestions.
- Highlight strategies or methods that have worked well in your courses.
- Ask for advice on navigating challenges.
- Celebrate wins and milestones.
- Ask questions and provide feedback directly to Smart Columbus.

What to avoid:

- Sharing sensitive participant information (e.g., personal details, contact info).
- Overloading the group with excessive messages.
- Engaging in non-program-related discussions.