

August 2024

FRANKLIN COUNTY DIGITAL EQUITY COALITION

Charter

This Charter is a statement of the scope, objectives and participants in the Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition (DEC).

It outlines the mission of the DEC, identifies the stakeholders, provides a preliminary delineation of roles and responsibilities, and defines the authority of the coordination organization. **It serves as a reference of authority for the future of the DEC.**

Vision

To make meaningful progress toward achieving Digital Equity, organizations and individuals in Franklin County must work to ensure all under-resourced residents have the digital resources necessary to live, learn, earn, and play in Franklin County, by ensuring access to residential Internet, connected devices, and digital skills training opportunities at an equitable level of quality that enables today's online experiences at an affordable price point for low-income households.

Mission

The purpose of the DEC is to bring together government, education, healthcare, social service, private sectors and institutions to promote, consolidate and collaborate in a unified response to closing the digital divide in Franklin County.

The goal of the DEC is to promote and to enhance the coordination and response capabilities of the community through:

Ecosystem enablement

- Building relationships and partnerships.
- Facilitating communication, information and resource sharing.

Ensure digital inclusion solutions and access is equitable and effective

- Spurring new solutions and activity where necessary to close gaps.

- Monitoring progress and outcomes
- Initiating activities such as strengthening the digital navigation capacity and capabilities in the community.

Advocacy for the cause and securing resources for the solutions

- Promoting situation awareness among DEC members and community stakeholders.
- Maximizing movement and utilization of existing resources
- Promoting sustainability of what works
- Attracting funding

Membership and Roles

- **General Members of the DEC**
 - **Affiliates:** Affiliate membership in the DEC is open to all entities, except for **Internet Service Providers**, that agree to work collaboratively on digital inclusion activities.
 - Affiliate Members are Organizations: organizations can be local non-profit, academic, government or philanthropic sector
 - Organizations **shall designate at least one representative** involved in the DEC and sign a partner member pledge
 - **Friends:** Friends of the DEC can be any individuals in the community who are passionate about working or advocating to close the digital divide (Represent separate from their organization)
- **Steering Committee Member:** Steering committee members are senior leaders responsible for the vision, direction, and overall health of the DEC.
- **DEC Coordinator:** The DEC is facilitated by a coordination entity that is responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating DEC activities.

The DEC should maintain representation from the following organizations:

- City of Columbus**
- Franklin County Board of Commissioners**
- Columbus Metropolitan Library**
- Columbus City Schools**
- The Columbus Foundation**
- At least one business community/economic development organization
- At least one community health center or a Federally Qualified Health Center
- At least one hospital system
- At least one higher ed institution

- At least one senior living organization

(Note: * Identifies the required steering committee membership.)

All members of the DEC should annually sign a conflict of interest.

General Membership Meetings and Expectations

Affiliate and Friend Members should:

- Attend regularly scheduled meetings.
- Participate in establishing priorities for the DEC
- Educate and inform members on their respective DEC activities.
- Participate in DEC-sponsored programming

Meetings

The DEC shall hold monthly general body meetings for affiliate and friend members. Special meetings may be convened at the request of the DEC Coordinator and/or Steering Committee.

Notice for regular monthly meetings shall be provided to all 'affiliate' and 'friend' members at least ten working days prior to the meeting. Notice for the special meeting shall be provided at least five working days prior to the meeting. Notices shall include the time, place and objective of the meeting, and the means available to join the meeting electronically.

The meeting agenda for regular meetings will be developed. Minutes of all meetings shall be prepared and distributed to the membership.

DEC Steering Committee

Steering Committee Membership and Expectations

The steering committee of the DEC should have no more than 15 members at any given time and no less than nine.

Steering committee members must be (a) senior leaders with decision making responsibilities of an affiliate member organization or (b) notable individual contributors to the cause of closing the digital divide.

The DEC Steering Committee seats should be allocated accordingly:

- ➔ Five representatives from the following organizations, each organization getting one appointment:
 - ◆ City of Columbus
 - ◆ Franklin County Board of Commissioners
 - ◆ Columbus Metropolitan Library
 - ◆ Columbus City Schools
 - ◆ The Columbus Foundation

- ➔ 10 Open Seats, which should be made up of at least:
 - ◆ one private sector representative
 - ◆ three non-profit organizations who are doing the work in the community.

Seats can be filled at the discretion of the existing steering committee members with consideration for diversity in terms of subject matter expertise, populations served, and demographic representation.

Steering Committee members are expected to:

- Serve as a spokesperson for the Digital Equity Coalition
- Attend at least 50% of general body meetings and 60% of Steering Committee meetings
- Actively engage in advocacy, fundraising, member recruitment, and additional activities of the DEC as needed

In situations of member transition, the following guidelines should be followed:

- If a steering committee member can not attend at least 60% of Steering Committee meetings and 50% of general body meetings, they should be replaced.
- If one of the five designated member organizations' representative(s) needs to step off the steering committee (for attendance, role change, resignation, etc.), the organization should appoint a new senior representative.
- If one of the ten open seat members needs to step off the steering committee (for attendance, role change, resignation, etc.), the Steering Committee should determine how they'd like to proceed.
 - It is not guaranteed that another representative from that same organization will be invited onto the Steering Committee. Steering committee should ensure the right fit of the person as well as the commitment of the organization to proceed with appointment.
- **When there is an open seat, existing steering committee members should approve**

the addition of a new member with a majority vote.

Steering Committee Role and Meetings

The Steering Committee is responsible for:

1. **Guiding Strategic Planning and Set Priorities:** Visioning and goal setting for the coalition, setting up governance and long term sustainability for the coalition
2. **DEC Membership:** Recruit and Retain new members
3. **DEC Ambassadorship:** Build Support in the Community for Digital Equity; Actively promoting and raising the profile of the work in the community and proactively building partnerships to strengthen the cause
4. **Financial Health:** Identifying and soliciting funding opportunities for existing and new priorities, advocating for ongoing government funding, and ensuring the financial health of the coordination function to continue the work

The Steering Committee should have at least six meetings a year.

The Steering Committee may create additional DEC committees as it deems necessary to conduct the business of the DEC.

DEC Coordination

The DEC is facilitated by Smart Columbus, who serves as the coordination entity that is responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating DEC activities. Tasks of the DEC Coordinator include:

- Providing general oversight for DEC activities and associated projects;
- Serving as the point of contact to the City of Columbus, Franklin County, and funders
- Providing technical assistance to implementing organizations; promoting digital equity within the region, etc.
- Management of grants, including the preparation and submission of grant documents such as work plan deliverables, and reporting as needed for DEC specific funding requests

The DEC Coordinator shall collaborate with the Steering Committee to achieve its goals and objectives.

Conducting Business of the DEC

The DEC is responsible for strategy, funding coordination, community building and information sharing, research, planning and piloting work that advances digital inclusion in the region. The table below summarizes the community responsibilities and how that work happens through the vehicle of the DEC.

Business Function	Type of Activities (Not Limited to These)	How Decisions are Made
<i>Strategy & Advocacy</i>		
Issuing Digital Equity Priorities for the Community and DEC	- Developing, publishing and maintaining Digital Equity Action Agenda	Input solicited from the DEC
Taking Positions on Policy Issues; Public Advocacy for support of Digital Inclusion Priorities	- Steering Committee members speak to media on behalf of DEC - Letter writing campaign by organizations - Collective/co-sign letter on behalf of DEC	Adopted by Steering Committee with Majority Vote
<i>Funding Coordination</i>		
Organizing grant applications	- Applied to FCC grant on behalf of DEC - Secure city and county dollars for collective work	Facilitated by Coordinator in consultation with the DEC
Sharing Funding Opportunities	- Sharing State funding opportunities	
<i>Community Building and Information Sharing</i>		
Facilitating information sharing between organizations through in person and virtual gatherings, as well as regular written communications;	- Monthly DEC General body meetings - Mid-year DEC Retreat	Facilitated by Coordinator in consultation with the DEC Steering Committee

Online tools		
Organizing and educating ISPs about local priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly meetings with Steering Committee and ISPs 	
<i>Research, Planning and Piloting</i>		
Initiate collective action pilots and programs to close digital divide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Piloting Digital Skills Hub - Piloting Device Distribution - Focus groups on marketing/communications efforts 	<p>Steering Committee agrees to pursue the work and ensures adequate resources, can stand up work group</p> <p>Facilitated by Coordinator</p>
Facilitate regular research and assessment activity to understand the state of the issue in our community	<p>Broadband Study ACP Adoption Dashboard</p>	Implementation done by various willing partners

Amendments and Changes to DEC Charter

The DEC should keep this Charter up to date and aligned with the ongoing growth and change of the coalition. The DEC Steering Committee is to review this charter document bi-annually and propose changes to the full DEC at a full body meeting. DEC members should be given 2 weeks to provide feedback on those changes before the Steering Committee votes to approve the changes. Changes are adopted by a majority vote of the Steering Committee. The coordinator can initiate change and amendments to the charter document as needed and must follow the same process for feedback and approval.

APPENDIX

Near-term Roles and Responsibilities (2024 - 2027)

COALITION (Private Sector/Non-Profit/Philanthropic Leaders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Owner of the vision and priorities - Broaden support for the digital equity cause and requisite action required across the community. ● Facilitate collective action in implementation of the Action Agenda ● Hold each other accountable for using the ConnectUS brand and staying committed to achieving the community goals. ● Get funders to the table - Help win support for important initiatives long term – Build long-term support and sustainment for projects and activities through advocacy and funding pursuits (EX: Advocacy for dollars) ● Ensure progress toward initiative/community goals – Monitor outcome progress. Monitor projects and programs and ensure they link to community goals. If they don't, should ensure they don't start or end quickly ● Advance methods for increased and ongoing stakeholder engagement, coordination and activation ● Maintain ISP engagement and host conversations to build the collaboration and partnership model
LOCAL GOVERNMENT (City and County)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide oversight and governance for the use of funding ● Codify detailed fiber and asset maps to inform infrastructure deployment strategy ● Pursue the appropriate methods of creating a public-private partnership for fiber to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the home at scale ● ++ Public Sector Device Donation

SMART COLUMBUS

- **Performance Measurement** – Facilitate common measurement tools for tracking progress to goals and reporting progress to DEC and funders
- **Guide Implementation** – Maintain implementation plan, putting in place execution teams with detailed work plans, facilitating communications, and facilitating spending
- **Standardized methodologies to support scale** – Help document what works to avoid duplication and wasted time and effort. Increase efficiencies and speed to value
- **Support the Implementers** – One-stop shop office for a wide range of tools, ideas, support and mentoring