Digital Skills Hub Pilot

Insights and Opportunities
March 2024

Pilot Objectives & Research Questions

Evaluate the efficacy of a 'Tech Goes Home' program model in bringing residents into a long term digital skills learning journey.

- How effective is providing a free device in incentivising residents to engage in digital skills training?
- How motivated are residents to continue their learning journey after the initial program?

Gain a better understanding of residents' motivations and desires for learning digital skills.

- What do residents want to learn and why?
- What will residents find valuable? What are their personal goals and aspirations?
- How well does the current curriculum meet residents' learning goals?

Evaluate the program's operational structure and resulting learning experience for its desirability and efficacy in providing a digital skills curriculum delivered across various organizations.

- Understand resident and partner experience and perception of program value connected to program administration, roles, and operations.
- Understand the ease of adapting open source content/curriculum across multiple organizations, audiences and delivery formats.

Research Methods

109 **Pre-survey responses**
98 **Post-survey responses**

3 **locations observed**
3 **Intercepts conducted**

3 **Residents interviewed**
4 **Instructors interviewed**

2 **Retrospective sessions**

Program Evaluation Surveys

Pre and post program survey questions that helped us establish benchmarks and evaluate program efficacy, participant motivations, and perception of program value before vs. after completing the program.

Site Observations & Intercepts

Observation and intercepts were used to collect data about program operations, learning experience and delivery format. (CML, Goodwill, JFS)

1:1 Interviews

Complimenting surveys and site observations, interviews allowed deeper qualitative insights into behaviors, perceptions, motivations, goals, and experiences of participants and instructors. We talked to instructors from CML, GW, JFS, ESC.

Retrospective sessions

Post program retro sessions allowed capturing general feedback and impressions of program coordinators and curriculum designer on main challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Current state blueprint

A tool for assessing and improving the program

A current state blueprint breaks down the end-to-end program experience into different phases and helps us identify gaps in its structure. It helps us understand what resources, processes and policies may be missing to provide a great experience not only to residents but also instructors and partner organizations. We will use this tool as a first step to evolve the program and ensure it is ready to scale.

Program phases
"The program journey"

Residents, instructors, and organizations actions and interactions.

Policies, processes and tools in place
Elements that shape how the program operates.

Pain points
Failures in the program that affect the resident's experience.

Opportunity areas
Ideas for program improvement.

Program Journey

To better understand the experience of residents and instructors throughout the program, we fragmented the experience into components of a journey.

Becoming Aware

Learning about the program, components, dates, times and benefits.

Getting Prepared

Getting registered, getting additional information and support, and training (instructors).

Course Launch

First day of school, receiving and setting up devices, getting familiar with the classroom.

Learning Experience

Rest of classes, course materials, resources, classroom dynamics.

Last Class

Handing over the devices and graduation.

After the Course

Follow-up engagement, and support to extend the learning journey.

Learnings & Insights

Overall, the program was received positively by residents and instructors.

- **Residents found the classes enjoyable and valuable.** Over 90% rated their instructor and the course overall as excellent and would recommend the class to others.

- **Instructors found the course materials useful and adaptable.** Instructors liked having a guide and being able to add in their own content and organization specific resources.

- **It was exciting to see people connect with the course content in real time.** Instructors enjoyed witnessing students connect skills they were learning in the course to practical applications.

- **The ability for residents to interact with each other, share stories, and support each other during the course was noted as particularly valuable.**

"This was an awesome opportunity and I learned a lot. The computer is a plus, but I gained knowledge that I did not have before."
– Program Participant

Residents reported having a higher level of confidence using technology after participating in the program.

84% of post-survey respondents said the course met their personal learning goals:

1. I want to feel more comfortable and confident using a device on my own.

2. I want to feel more comfortable and confident using the internet on my own.

3. Online safety and security.

4. I want to increase my access to resources and information.

5. Increase opportunities for work and income generation.

6. Increase opportunities for education.

7. Increase opportunities for social connection and communication (social media, video calling, etc.).

A free device is motivation to get people 'in the door', and a good learning experience gets them interested in more.
Over 80% of respondents indicated they were interested in participating in further learning and activities offered by the organization. Interests include:

1. Office skills (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.)

2. Creative / Graphics

3. Accessing job resources

4. Entrepreneurship resources

5. Apple products

Program highlights and areas of success.

- **The registration process was easy** for most and enough information was provided to enroll and understand the next steps.

- **The device unboxing experience was a highlight for residents.**

- **Smaller class sizes were ideal for residents and instructors.** On average there were 9 participants in each cohort across the 3 organizations.

- **Peer learning was enjoyable and effective** in keeping everyone on the same page and engaged.

- **Instructors were able to create a casual and inclusive atmosphere**. Residents felt comfortable asking questions and engaging in conversation and materials presented.

- **Ending the course with a celebration brought joy and a sense of accomplishment to the residents.** Some cohorts had a closing ceremony with food, diplomas and graduation photos that was very well received by residents.

"The instructor was very good, insightful and gave great examples...allowed us to talk and was very patient."
- Program Participant

Program awareness and preparation.

- **Residents who had questions about the program found no direct way to get more information.** How people were made aware of the program and how it was explained were top things survey respondents would change.

- **It may take longer than expected to adapt the course materials and become familiar with the devices.** Some instructors reported that they were frustrated by the amount of time they had to spend preparing, and modifying course material.

- Residents indicated wanting **more options and flexibility in the dates, times, and locations of courses available to them.**

- **The registration process is a barrier to those who are digitally excluded and a time consuming task for Digital Navigators** helping residents through the process.

- **Finding the location of the classroom was mentioned as an inconvenience by some residents.**

"When I had questions about the skills hub I called the library and it took me a long time to find someone who actually knew about it. I would like a more direct point of contact to call, not just an email."
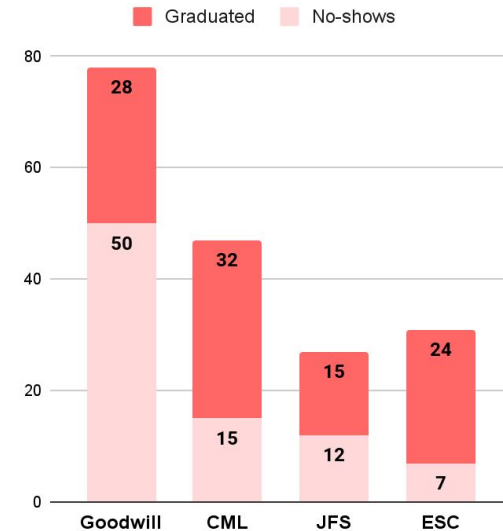- Program Participant

"We have, four staff-led programs right now. Each of those has a prep hour that goes with it, you shouldn't need much more time than this... But with this course, I could see it taking some more time to personalize it. Not just at the beginning but like week to week as you figure out who you've got in your group."
- Instructor

First class and learning experience.

- **The device setup process during the first class took a lot of unanticipated time**, was tedious for the instructors and a little overwhelming for the residents–specifically navigating logins and setting up accounts.

- **183 residents registered to the program, but only 99 completed the course successfully.** Goodwill cohorts had a higher percentage of no-shows compared to the other organizations.

- **Lack of childcare and clear communication about children in the classroom.** Some students brought their children to class, which was distracting for others. However, lack of childcare support or a clear policy was a barrier to those with children.

- **Multilingual classrooms were challenging.** Some residents who participated in the program do not speak English and it was a challenge for both, them and the facilitators to navigate the sessions in a multilingual classroom. It was not the ideal experience for a diverse community.

"I had to spend a lot of individual attention with people...Getting through things slow meant sometimes a lot of people were sitting around waiting for us to move on. And that's unfortunate..."
– Instructor

Legend: Graduated · No-shows

- Goodwill: Graduated 28, No-shows 50
- CML: Graduated 32, No-shows 15
- JFS: Graduated 15, No-shows 12
- ESC: Graduated 24, No-shows 7

Last class and extending engagement.

- **There is no coordinated promotion around continued engagement after the last class.** Some instructors offered complementary programs and additional support services, however, what this looks like is not consistent across cohorts.

- **Some residents want and need more individual attention while others** desired more advanced topics or wanted to go more in-depth into specific areas. Instructors struggle to accommodate a diverse range of skill and ability levels in one class.

- **The final showcase can be intimidating if not introduced in a low-pressure way.** Present the final showcase less as an assignment and more as a learning exchange, an opportunity to show how what they have learned has served them in their daily life.

"I know the library offer different things but they didn't share any particular program at the end of the class."
- Program Participant

"I liked the flexibility of learning. I believe being in a class with people who struggled logging into their device and email took away from time I wanted to explore more advanced computer technology like image manipulation."
- Program Participant

Opportunities

How can we help instructors to be fully equipped and prepared to deliver the course effectively?

Iterate on the processes, systems, and tools to ensure these support resources are easily accessible and utilized by facilitators. How might we improve the preparation experience for facilitators?

1. Include **training on basic facilitation and teaching** to guarantee a baseline of facilitation, specific to teaching digital skills (i.e. Digital Resilience).

2. In addition to the training session, ensure that instructors have enough time to prepare for classes. **Provide a class prep guide** that indicates the approx. time needed to prepare each session and clarifies how to use additional resources to customize the content.

   a. During training, emphasize that preparation time is required before each class.

3. **Provide a device guide**, with information on how to answer device warranty questions, tips for safely storing devices, device setup protocols for first (guest mode) and last sessions (personal sign-in).

4. **Create more moments of joy and connection embedded within the curriculum.** Provide instructors with a **facilitation guide** that includes a framework for establishing rules of engagement early in the course, building in moments for social connection, and encouraging greater community building among participants (i.e. providing food and beverages, celebrating course completion, encouraging conversations).

   a. Peer learning was engaging and helped manage the variety of skills in the classroom. Consider matching resident interests and skill levels to appropriate courses/cohorts.

How might we create a seamless experience for participants to move between registration and the first day of class?

1. **Consider a data collection system that is robust enough to scale and allows for more effective data collection throughout the program.** Registration forms and pre and post-program surveys should **assess needs, interests, and learning goals**, and also **evaluate program success**.

2. Organizations should create their own **childcare policy**. This policy should be tailored to the organization's capabilities and resources to ensure that it is feasible and effective, and should be communicated with residents at multiple times before the course begins. If possible, consider offering childcare options and allocate funding for it.

3. **Provide residents with more flexibility and choice in class dates, times and locations.** This may be easier to accommodate as the program scales and more organizations are able to offer more courses. Weekend classes and offering residents the option to make-up classes proved to be successful.

   a. Consider **waitlist** options to ensure a full class in case of no-shows.
   b. Integrate a flexible **make-up class policy** so residents aren't discouraged from returning if they miss a class or two.
   c. Consider a **master schedule tool** where facilitators can access the schedule of all locations and classes and be able to redirect participants to a different location that has the appropriate amount of devices/seats to receive them.

4. **Boost communication with residents leading up to the first class.**
   a. Send **personalized reminders** via SMS and phone calls the day before the first class.
   b. Consider adding a **customer service line** to answer residents' questions.
   c. Include **wayfinding instructions** in communications with residents prior to the first class.

How can we provide sufficient support to help participants make the most of their learning journey?

1. **Keep class sizes small** (12 residents or less) to encourage dialogue and comfort for both residents and instructors.

2. **Have a tech support person as a second instructor** to handle questions and help residents move through the session. Make sure the second instructor is present for sessions with more complex content (e.g. account setup, Google apps).

3. **Partner with organizations that are already working with new Americans to teach courses in other languages.** These organizations can promote the course in their community, and have staff trained to join as instructors in other organizations' courses.

4. **Consider the range of experience and skills of different instructors**. There is an opportunity to bolster collaboration, resource sharing, and support across instructors and organizations.

5. **Extend the learning and engagement journey beyond the last class.** Most residents expressed a desire to continue learning and an interest in engaging in additional programming. There is an opportunity to help residents create a customized learning journey that meets their needs and connect them to an ecosystem of opportunities throughout the community.
   a. Have a **DSH call center for the region** so residents can get support when they need it, to continue using their devices.
   b. Bring a catalog of courses and resources from community colleges and other educational institutions so residents can see how to continue their learning journey.

Next Steps

1. Review current state blueprint and evaluate opportunities for improvement.

   a. Prioritize opportunities and assess their viability and feasibility.

2. Outline scenarios for scale and future state blueprint.

3. Secure funding and identify partners.

4. Determine implementation roadmap.