

A series of approximately ten parallel, wavy blue lines that originate from the top left corner and curve towards the right, creating a sense of motion and digital connectivity.

# **DIGITAL SKILLS HUB**

## **PARTNERSHIP GUIDE**

**Released April 2024**

# INTRODUCTION

**The Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition** and **Smart Columbus** are seeking implementation partners to provide digital skills training to 10,000 Franklin County residents as part of the new 'Digital Skills Hub.' Funding for this effort is provided by the [City and County's Digital Equity Investment](#).

## ABOUT THE DIGITAL SKILLS HUB

The Digital Skills Hub was developed collaboratively by organizations in the **Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition** (DEC) to close the digital divide by offering residents a new computing device for successful completion of a minimum of 10 hours of digital skills training. The goal of this effort is for 10,000 under-resourced residents to benefit from at least 10 hours of training and a new device by the end of 2026.

Training partners leverage a common curriculum and central administrative infrastructure to facilitate courses and distribute devices across the county. The Digital Skills Hub ran a four month pilot with four organizations who effectively trained 99 residents. The learnings from this pilot can be found [here](#).

## CALL FOR PARTNERS

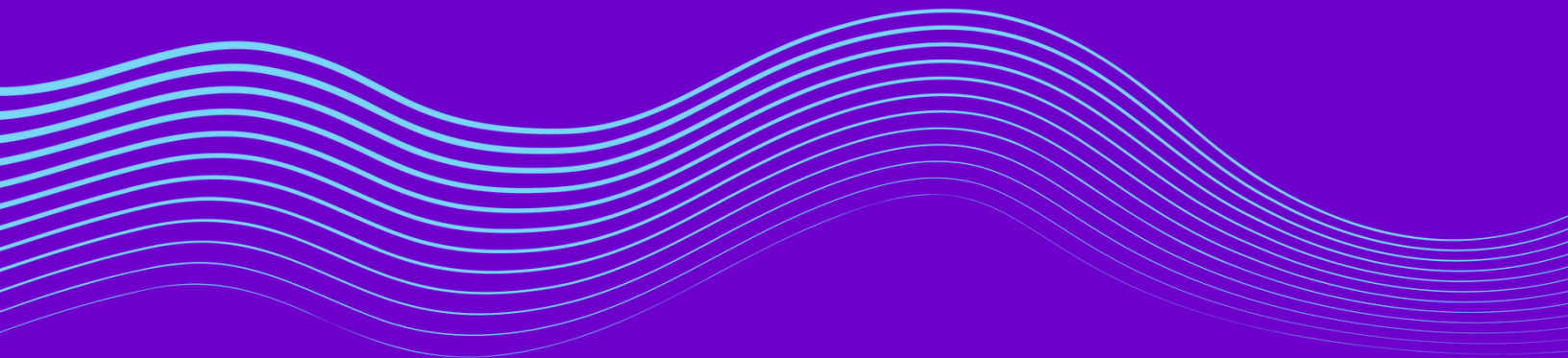
By the end of May 2024, Smart Columbus seeks to formalize partnerships with community-based organizations who can commit to offering digital skills training to the residents they serve from 2024 to 2026. **We are seeking community organizations who are interested in hosting and delivering digital skills training sessions at their locations, and community organizations interested in hosting a training delivered by a visiting community digital skills trainer.** Funding is available for the time and materials an organization would incur through implementation. Interested organizations should email Ore Ishola at [oi@smartcolumbus.com](mailto:oi@smartcolumbus.com) to express interest and register for one of the following prospective partner briefings:

- **April 10, 2024 – 10.00am : Columbus Metropolitan Library Hilltop – 511 S. Hague Ave**
- **April 15, 2024 – 1.30pm: Goodwill Columbus Brice Road – 2675 Brice Road**
- **April 22, 2024 – 1.00pm: Jewish Family Services – 1070 College Avenue**

*Smart Columbus is unable to guarantee every interested organization will be selected to participate. Determination will be based on capacity, geographic coverage, funding, and readiness. A second call for partners will be offered only if additional capacity is required. **Interested organizations are encouraged to express their interest now.***

# Digital Skills Hub Overview

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# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## Collective Goal

By the end of 2026, 10,000 under-resourced Franklin County residents complete a digital skills training course in the Digital Skills Hub and receive a new device that they can use to access what they want and need to do online.

## Design Objectives

- **Empower Learners:** Courses are tailored to empower individuals with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in today's digital world.
- **Boost Confidence:** We believe that confidence is key to digital literacy. Courses aim to boost participants' confidence in using technology effectively.
- **Foster Independence:** We emphasize self-sufficiency, ensuring that learners can independently navigate the digital landscape, from basic tasks to more advanced skills.
- **Enhance Opportunities:** By acquiring digital skills, participants open doors to new opportunities, whether it's in education, employment, or personal growth.
- **Bridge the Digital Divide:** We are committed to closing the digital divide by making digital education accessible to all, regardless of background or experience.

## HOW IT WORKS

### Curriculum & Training

- The Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition established [5 learning competencies](#) to direct curriculum development. It is anticipated that at least 5 modules of curriculum will be developed, one for each competency.
- Implementation partners may adapt the course curriculum to their specific audience, context and devices.
- Courses are a minimum of 10 hours, however most organizations provide 15 hours of curriculum per course, or 2-3 hours per course module.
- Implementation partners may break up the 10-15 hours of training in whatever format that works best for their population and staff – Ex: Four 2.5 hr sessions on four consecutive Saturdays, One hour a week for 10 weeks, Two 2.5 hour sessions per week for five weeks, etc.

## Devices

- Residents who complete the training program get to go home with their new device – such as a Chromebook, iPad, Surface, etc.
- Smart Columbus procures the devices for all partners in order to obtain the best device for residents at the lowest overall cost to the program. This means that participating organizations will choose from a selection of devices and operating systems.

## Behind the Scenes

- The Digital Skills Hub will have a central online portal for residents to register and enroll.
- ConnectUs branded marketing collateral and materials will be made available for implementation partners to adapt and use to promote their courses.
- Course participants will be expected to complete a standardized pre-and post assessment administered by partnering organizations.
- Course instructors are encouraged to share feedback with course designers and researchers to ensure that learning goals and outcomes are being met for program participants.

## FOCUSED IMPACT

With a decentralized model and shared curriculum, the Digital Skills Hub aims to offer a common, high-quality learning experience that can reach a diverse population of residents. More specifically, the Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition has prioritized those living 200% or below the federal poverty line from the following **populations**:

### Housing Insecure

Those who are experiencing one of several different dimensions of accommodation problems, including affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and homelessness.

### Older Adults

Individuals who are 65 years of age or older.

### Veterans

Those who served in the active military, naval, or air service.

### Living with a Disability

Defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

## Students

Those engaged in PreK-12, vocational or trade school, and higher education.

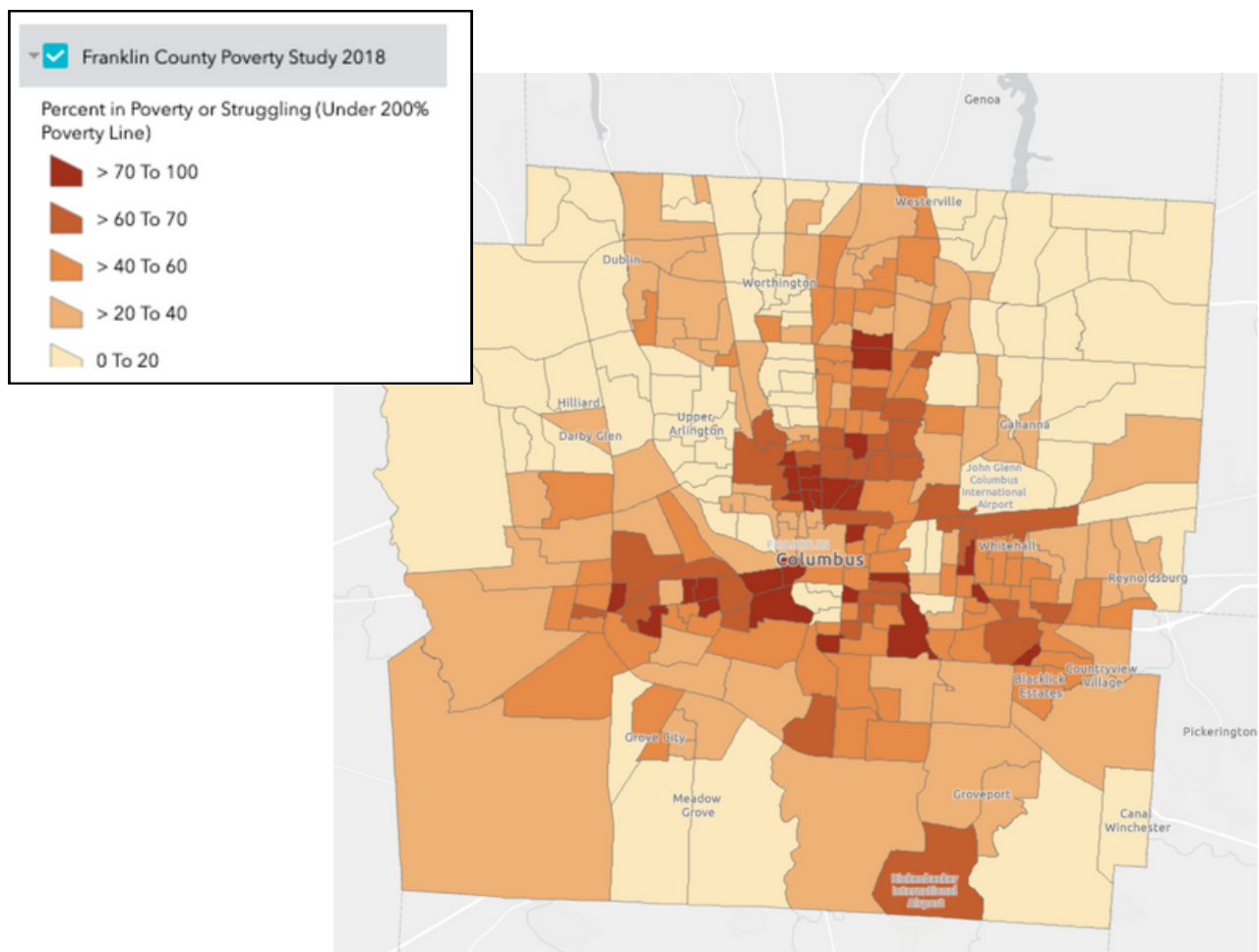
## Justice Involved

Those who have had interactions with the criminal justice system as a defendant.

## New Americans, Immigrants or Migrant Families

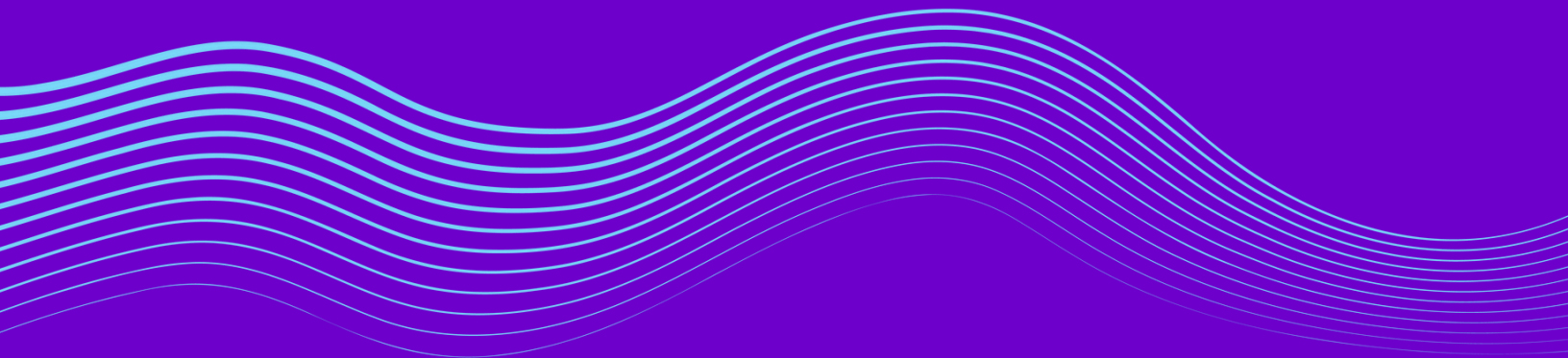
Immigrants and Migrant Families: Individual(s) in the U.S. who aspire to take the Path to U.S. Citizenship, or who have, in the recent past, become naturalized citizen(s) of the United States of America.

In addition to prioritizing specific populations, we seek to strike a balance of geographic distribution of course location offerings throughout Franklin County specifically prioritizing areas of Franklin County and the City of Columbus with high concentrations of those living in poverty.



# Becoming a Partner Organization

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# BECOMING A PARTNER

**After a successful pilot program** in 2023, the Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition is expanding the Digital Skills Hub by inviting additional partner organizations to deploy digital skills courses.

## **As part of the Digital Skills Hub, Partner Organizations are responsible for:**

- Adopting and implementing collaboratively developed common curriculum that they can tailor to the residents they serve.
- Dedicate one or more course instructors to 1) participate in facilitator training 2) adapt the training to meet the needs of your organization's learners and 3) operate a series of 10–15 hour courses; organizations can determine the course schedule and cadence (i.e., one 2-hour course a week for 5 weeks, ten 1 hour courses over 5 weeks, three 3–4 hour courses over 3 weeks).
- Recruit participants to attend courses by marketing courses in alignment with the ConnectUS brand.
- Receive, track, securely store, set up and distribute devices to learners (Est: one month of inventory at a time).
- Document and report key information (enrollment and completion, participant and trainer feedback, etc.).
- Participate in program design sessions, ongoing training, and program feedback/research activities.
- Be willing to share best practices publicly as needed.
- Secure and coordinate physical training space with adequate work space and instructional tools to ensure a positive learning environment.
- Iteratively improve course delivery based on feedback from participants, the collective of partners, and Smart Columbus.

## **On behalf of the Digital Skills Hub and DEC, Smart Columbus will:**

- Facilitate distribution of funding to cover staff time and course-related costs.
- Issue at least six courses of core curriculum that can be tailored to your specific population and needs.
- Train course instructors.
- Register learners, placing them into appropriate courses.
- Assist with automated reminder communications to learners before, during and after training.
- Procure and deliver new devices to implementation partners for disbursement to residents that complete the training for the first time.



- Provide marketing materials to partner organizations.
- Promote course enrollment with a county-wide marketing effort.
- Conduct pre and post course evaluation.
- Collect feedback from the facilitator and learner experiences, make improvements accordingly, and collect data about learning outcomes and impact.

### What makes a good Partner Organization?

- You are motivated to close the digital divide for the residents you serve.
- You will commit to being active in the collective coordination efforts, including but not limited to participating in the DEC, engaging in curriculum review, providing content feedback, and attending in person working sessions.
- You serve at least one of the priority populations identified by the DEC.
- You can meaningfully contribute to recruiting and enrolling residents into the courses (Est. 15 completions per course).
- You are located within the City of Columbus or Franklin County and serve residents also located within city and/or county limits.
- You can securely store, track, and distribute devices.
- You have a classroom-like environment that can accommodate 10-15 learners on a regular basis, or are willing to partner with another organization that has available facilities.
- Organizations who can provide instruction as well as space.
  - You have instructors on staff or can bring on staff who are well-positioned to teach digital skills courses.
  - You are willing to have flexible course schedules that meet the needs of learners (i.e., evenings and weekends).

