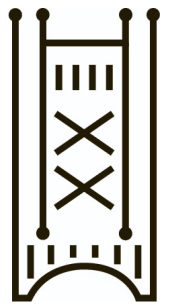# Capital Region Coalition For Digital Inclusion
Quarterly Meeting Notes
September 23, 2022

<u>**Digital Navigator Panel**</u>

- **Definition:** Digital Navigators are trusted guides who assist community members in internet adoption and the use of computing devices. Digital navigation services include ongoing assistance with affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, and application support.

- **Importance:** Digital Navigators' crucial role in the digital inclusion ecosystem centers on providing direct support to communities to help bridge the digital divide, specifically in the areas of affordable connectivity and digital skills building.

- **Guest Panel:**
    - Danielle Stephen, Community Resilience Director at moHuman
        - [moDAT Portal](#) / [Capital Region moDAT portal](#)
    - Jerry Yamashita, Instructional Technologist at Highlands Community Charter and Technical Schools
        - [Highlands Community Charter and Technical Schools](#)
    - Carolyn Glauda, Librarian for Education and Outreach at Southeastern NY Library Resources Council / Program Manager for the Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley
        - [Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley](#)
    - Abi Waldrupe, Digital Navigator Manager at National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)
        - [NDIA Digital Navigator Model and Skills Assessment](#)

- **Question: Please introduce yourself and give us an overview of your Digital Navigator program.**
    - *Jerry*: Program began April 2020 as a partnership with NDIA to solve the problem of instructional staff offering technical assistance more than teaching
        - Started as "digital caseworkers" and transitioned to "digital navigators"

- By October 2020, six employed digital navigators, who were also translators, to address language barriers along with technical barriers
    - *Abi*: NDIA has a role of supporting, learning from, and elevating the community of digital inclusion practitioners and experts
        - Digital inclusion model is an example of that work - established by NDIA, developed by communities
        - Found that Digital navigators were needed in order to provide 1-1 support, repeated interactions, and work in all areas of digital inclusion
        - NDIA provides support to nationwide digital navigators programs through training assistance, resources on NDIA's website, and the digital navigator working group
        - Just launched: National digital navigator corps grant program, focused on expanding digital navigator programs to tribal and rural communities
    - *Danielle*: Based in San Diego, program began in 2018 to address gaps in digital literacy
        - Current programs focused on community health educators
        - Evolutionizing educators into digital navigators, expanding their knowledge on community health and digital literacy
        - Putting the community first and prioritizing cultural relevancy
        - Crucial to evaluate and assess communities in order to provide digital navigators which represent and can strengthen communities
    - *Carolyn*: Started through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant distributed to the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council by the State Librarian for digital inclusion work
        - Council coordinated with the two public library systems in the region, totalling eight counties, to implement to
        - Started January 2021 and mobilized July 2021
        - Currently at 72 active digital navigators, completed a second training cohort, working throughout 48 different institutions - libraries and CBOs
        - 4 day training and regular check-ins and listserv communication

- Not employees, but volunteers who receive stipends upon following requirements of meeting with a set number of clients, tracked through forms
- Participation still continues even after funding has closed
- **Question: How do your programs identify and recruit navigators in their communities?**
  - _Danielle_: Recruitment depends on the community, look for the underserved and unserved, need to be engaged with the community
    - Important to be skilled in a way to connect with people, digital skills and training can be taught
  - _Abi_: Best digital navigators are those from the community they serve, as they understand the cultural relevancy and connect with the community on a personal level
    - Technical skills are not highly important, more important to find candidates who have empathy, understand the community language, and are problem-solvers
    - Technical skills can be taught, a digital navigators client can technically graduate to become a digital navigator
    - Internal recruitment, finding staff who already have the aptitude and interest for this work (CBOs, librarians)
  - _Carolyn_: Empathy and patience are two major qualities for digital navigators
    - Visits would often be 45 minutes to an hour
    - Interactions often involve assisting with simple tasks
    - Digital navigators need to be empowered that they know how to do it
    - Skills include: cultural competency, interpersonal skills, ability to solve problems, ability to stay positive
    - The work of digital navigators: "Problems are not complex, but solutions are life-changing"
  - _Jerry_: Program is different as it is internal, not serving the community/public, focused on supporting their students
    - Representation of students is a priority, done through languages offered

- Not only a technical position, more customer service orientated
- When digital navigator position was listed, Career Technical Education Program was created alongside, transformed into the Student Community Digital Navigator Program,
  - Teaches the fundamentals of digital literacy and then how to become a digital navigators
  - [Northstar digital literacy assessment tool](#) and google applied digital skills curriculum is used
  - So far 5 graduates hired, creating a pipeline
- **Question:** Can you tell us more about the training curriculum for your digital navigators, particularly how they are being trained to work in the community?
  - *Carolyn*: Hired NDIA to provide the digital navigator training
    - 4 days straight, 1.5 hour each day, consisting of learning about the Affordable Connectivity Program, assistance form overview, and more
    - 2nd cohort watched recorded trainings from 1st cohort, NDIA re-hired to provide touch-ups and updated information
    - Cohort meets every 2 weeks; optional to those who have completed trainings
    - Digital navigators are managed by their institution as needs vary among each institution
    - Institutions commonly have "navigator hours" at their institution
  - *Abi*: Data and research is a core teaching, asset mapping, discovering existing community efforts
    - Guide digital navigators to see what the digital divide looks like and where their impact will be
    - Helps to set goals and understand why they are doing what they're doing and the possibility of the impact of their work
  - *Jerry*: started internally and seeking support staff who have the desire to work on technical skills building

- Also a student side - the pipeline where the curriculum is built in
- Not a lot of training on working with the community, as they are coming from the community - already understand cultural norms, tradition, nuances
- Student program for digital navigators more seen as professional development
  - *Danielle*: Developed their own curriculum and assessment
    - Pick digital navigators that are lifelong learners that want to help others
    - Baseline assessment in used to tailor curriculum on trainings needed
      - One training is on the Modat portal
    - Teaching digital skills and device skills
    - Important to realize digital navigator is not a "end all be all" it is a pathway for equity across industries
      - Broadband is a social determinant of health
- **Question: How does your organization currently (or plan to) promote your digital navigator program in the communities you work in?**
  - *Abi*: Start with organizations which has provided assistance to one piece of digital inclusion important
    - Targeted outreach - meet people where they already are (community centers)
    - Offline methods - flyers, door knocking or hangers, radio
    - Social media is a way - family members forwarding to potential clients
  - *Jerry*: "word of mouth" which helps students feels welcomed and comfortable
    - Biggest priority: being present and letting folks know what we have to offer
    - Site have devices that can checked out and taken off site
  - *Carolyn*: through grant funds, able to hire a professional marketing company to develop logos, bookmarks, flyers, banners, social media posts, and press releases which were shared to partner institutions

- Developed a website where materials and information are located

- Keep putting the information out there

- Digital navigators have a "ask me" button

- Criticism of advertisement being too wordy

- When advertised as "tech help" this resonated for clients

  - *Danielle*: Digital navigators promote themselves through their direct assistance and clients wanting to learn more

    - Partnership and relationships with other organization who are helping through promotion and involvement

    - Has not been difficulty and we're educating not selling

- **Question: What barriers and/or key takeaways have you encountered while administering your program? Do you have any tips or suggestions for communities looking to support or form their own digital navigator program?**

  - *Danielle*: One barrier has been lack of trust

    - Overcoming historical harms, things people now believer are too good to be true, past negative experiences

    - Important to develop trust over time

    - Big need, but community members are guarded and scared

    - Tip: find a partner with a similar outlook and goals, collaborate and write grant as a team

      - Make sure program is sustainable and scalable

  - *Abi*: Important part of digital navigators is clients need to feel at ease

    - Need to be a trusted individual from an organization that can be respected and reflective of the community

    - Digital navigators need to be flexible to make people feel at ease

    - Clients need to feel there is an abundance of help

  - *Carolyn*: Give clients grace and time to learn

    - Digital navigators to provide support through patience and time

- - *Jerry*: Important to recognize access doesn't mean opportunity, there are still barriers
    - Important to go into the community and making the program visible

Participant Q&A:
- **"What kinds of theoretical lenses are being used to frame this work, especially in the grants being written? (e.g. public health, social justice?)"**
  - *Jerry*: An academic research focus is the Technology Acceptance Model
    - Theoretical lenses to see if the services you're providing through the digital navigator model - it is effective, are clients/students/patrons using the technology the way they want to, what are their perceptions
  - *Danielle*: Grants are written through various lenses, such as public health and social justice
    - Dependent on the pathway and historical content of the community
- **"How are these either paid or volunteer positions? Also - seems like the position can be a stand alone role or many elements can be integrated into various roles in an organization (front desk, counselor, teacher, etc.)"**
  - *Abi*: there is variety, the model is flexible and adapt to fit different ways
    - Important to have skilled and trained volunteers with more long term service
    - Important to recognize clients need to feel abundance of help, as they may have had prior negative experiences through ISPs, etc
  - *Danielle*: moHuman's model consists of paid digital navigators
    - Contract already has designated pay and amount for digital navigators
  - *Carolyn*: sustained funding model is important
    - Experience with one-time payment at completion is relationship usually ends
    - Once a digital navigator, always a digital navigators, certification does not expire

- **"A more focused question than Rick's (entire curriculum), do the navigators get training assessing digital literacy? If so, what resources do you use that others might adopt?"**
    - *Abi*: NDIA has a skills assessment form
        - [Recent NDIA blog post on digital skills curriculum](#)
- **"For digital navigators assisting individuals to sign up for ACP and other programs that have eligibility requirements, how are you addressing privacy and/or associated liability, and also providing adequate information about what is need to sign up, i.e. eligibility requirements"**
    - *Carolyn*: Presenting the requirements for ACP rather than asking if client qualify
        - No real time ACP sign-ups, only providing information and guiding to the site
        - Digital navigators are not asking for client's personal information, rather providing the tools for clients to apply themselves
    - *Danielle*: Digital navigators are place-based
        - Navigators are working alongside client in real-time, to answer questions
    - *Abi*: One example model, Center for Digital Equity in Charlottesville, NC, has digital navigators complete paperwork regarding privacy

Digital Inclusion Week
- October 3-7
- A national event, week of recognition and celebration of organizations' work towards digital inclusion and highlighting the importance of digital inclusion to communities, legislators, and policymakers
- Valley Vision and CRCDI will be participating in Digital Inclusion Week
- If you would like to featured, complete the [interest form](#)
- Access CRCDI's digital inclusion week toolkit

Next Quarterly Meeting

- Friday, December 9, 2022 from 11:00-12:30 P.M. PST
  - [Meeting Registration](#)
- Topic: Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)
  - Federal assistance program which provides eligible households a $30 discount on internet services along with a $100 discount on an eligible device
  - https://www.fcc.gov/acp