



Digital inclusion in Western Australia

What we heard

Key findings summary of the feedback we received on the draft
Blueprint for Digital Inclusion in WA

Produced and published by

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet

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Accessibility

The WA Government is committed to making sure that all Western Australians can access and understand the feedback on our proposed approach for digital inclusion in WA.

Our *What we Heard Report* is in an accessible format and hard copies can be provided on request.

If you have any issues accessing the information required, please contact us.



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Disclaimer

The opinions in this report reflect the views of our stakeholders that were provided during the engagement process and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.



What did we hear about?

Digital inclusion is about making sure that Western Australians are connected and included in an increasingly digital world. It's not just about being able to connect to the internet.

Everyone should be able to access and use digital technology.

It's also about having the know-how you need to connect, being able to afford those connections, and having access to digital tools that are designed in a way that meets your needs.

More and more, having the ability to reach out to others and access everyday Government, health, or retail services online is becoming part of everyday life.

But a number of Western Australians experience barriers to being connected in the same way.

We wanted to understand what these barriers look like, why they exist, and how we can help every person in WA to be digitally included.

What we heard will help us put together a Blueprint for Digital Inclusion in WA that empowers the people and communities to engage with the internet and technology in the way they choose.

The Blueprint will outline the WA Government's approach and outline some key initiatives to make WA a digitally inclusive State.

It presents areas for improving digital inclusion – connectivity, affordability, skills, and design, and projects that can be delivered in partnership for the most vulnerable members of the community.

Digital inclusion will ensure WA is ready for the future.

How did we engage?

75,540

interactions

Including broad-reach and targeted or direct engagement

Broad-reach

42,500



Estimated reach via radio

2,973



Emails and online newsletters inviting people and organisations to participate

25,901



Estimated reach via twitter (with support from other agencies)

3,449



Unique landing webpage visits

Targeted or direct



Face to face



Phone conversations

624



Online and paper surveys



Workshops and forums



Information sessions and presentations

93

participants



Who did we hear from?

Location

Responses came from

Albany to Kununurra

Including Cocos (Keeling) Islands, South Hedland, Warburton and Leonora.

 Lightest to heaviest



Responses

624

Total survey responses



- 274** Lived experience surveys
- 186** Individual blueprint surveys
- 164** Organisation blueprint surveys

Individuals

92%

Experience at least one difficulty or unmet need in connectivity, affordability, skills, or design of digital technology.



19%

are low income



24%

are over the age of 65



30%

come from rural or regional WA



13%

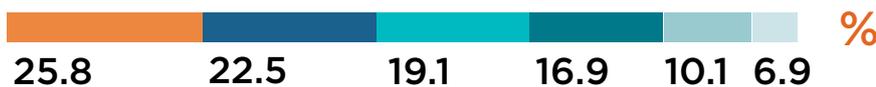
are living with a disability



6%

are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Organisations



- Local Government agency
- Non-profit organisation
- State Government agency
- Community service provider
- Industry/business
- Other

What did we hear about people's experiences of digital inclusion in WA?

We asked if any areas are difficult for you or our community. We have grouped what you told us by the following categories:



Connectivity



Affordability



Skills



Design



Support
or services
currently
used



What could
help



Internet and online services are the back bone of modern society. The provision of this backbone should be seen as basic infrastructure by government who shouldn't squeal and give us half baked solutions or leave it to the for-profit private sector.





Connectivity



1 in 3 households find it difficult to get a connection to the internet, and **62%** say it's because their connection drops out, is slow or buffers.



Speeds are just a guess and the phone 4G is off and on... it makes it very difficult to just do normal things.



- Have slow connection
- Have no mobile coverage
- Have no NBN
- Have no device
- Other



Affordability



1 in 3 people say they find it difficult to afford being online. **45%** cannot afford an internet connection and **28%** cannot afford a mobile plan.



Everything costs money – we have to decide whether we eat, medicate or communicate.



- Cannot afford internet connection
- Cannot afford a mobile phone plan
- Overall costs are too high, or experience other affordability difficulties
- Cannot afford digital devices



Skills



1 in 3 people find it hard to use some aspects of digital technology. **26%** find computer viruses challenging, **24%** have experienced online scams and **23%** don't know how to use programs or apps.



I feel helpless and disconnected... If I loose my phone I have to start MYGov again.



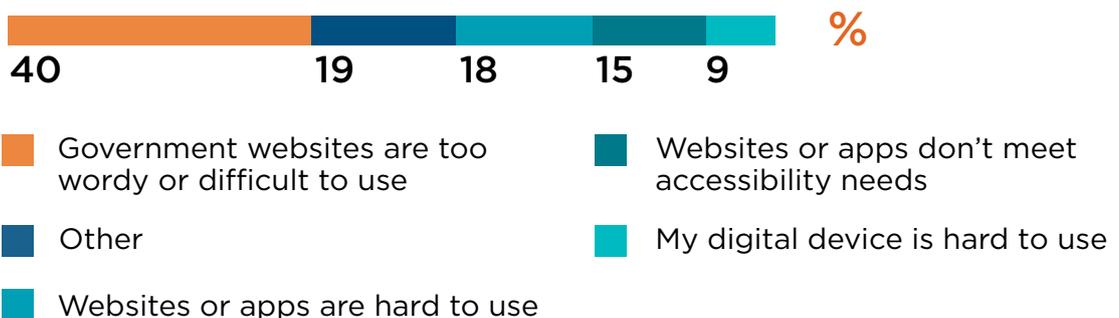
Design



Almost **2 in 3** people do not feel that digital technology or services are designed to meet their needs with **40%** finding Government websites too wordy or difficult to use.



Dealing with government websites is very time consuming and frustrating.





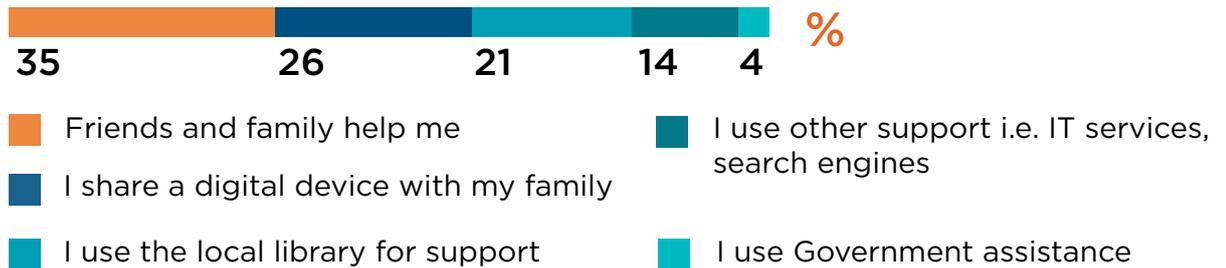
Support or services currently used



1 in 2 people use at least one support or service to access the internet or digital technology.

Of these, **35%** ask friends or family for help, 26% share a digital device with family, and 21% use their local library.

“My friend who does not have a PC will often ask me to use my PC to access government messages.”



“Those who do not wish or are unable to access digital technology should continue to be catered for by other means – e.g. paper bills via post and should not be charged extra for it.”



What else could help?



Almost **3** out of **4** people suggested at least one thing that would help them access and use internet and digital technologies.

support would help them to have better access and use of internet and digital technologies.

34% let us know they need a better internet connection, **21%** would like training in digital skills, and **27%** said other initiatives such as financial or in-person

“The impact of COVID-19 has shown that those with digital capability and access were better able to continue a level of social interaction throughout periods of lockdowns.”



What did we hear about the draft blueprint?

Vision for WA

Over **90%** of people and organisations supported our vision for digital inclusion in WA, with many saying digital inclusion should be seen as an essential need, not just as something to enjoy.



It was exciting to hear everyone talk about the need for connectivity in the home to be considered as an essential service in the same way as power and water.

The need of businesses and organisations

From businesses and organisations we heard that the quality of internet connection is very important for competitive advantage.



Consistent digital connectivity is absolutely vital and crucial for businesses to expand and operate in the broader State, National and Global economies.

Is anyone missing from the Blueprint?



Almost **1 in 2** identified a group or community who were missing from the Blueprint.



Culturally and linguistically diverse persons (CaLD), refugees, or newly arrived migrants



People accessing a community service



School students / youth



47% felt CaLD, refugees, and newly arrived migrants should be more included in the Blueprint.

Which priority areas will most benefit the community ?

Participants were allowed to support more than 1 priority.

Over 2 in 3

Connectivity



Almost 2 in 3

Affordability



Almost 2 in 3

Skills



Almost 1 in 2

Design



Are there any priority areas missing from the Blueprint?

Some people suggested the Blueprint should also focus on:



Security



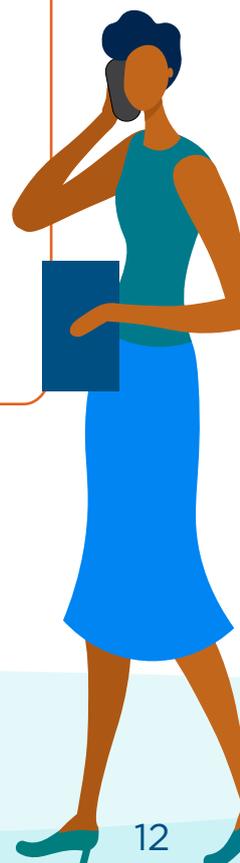
Access to digital technologies



Awareness of the benefits and options of digital technologies



This is probably the first time I have seen in my experience the government actually asking these important questions. Keep it up. Our mob need to have more access to the nation and to the world.



Where to from here?

The most popular initiatives to support digital inclusion

- 

1. More free wi-fi hubs
(Affordability initiative)
- 

2. Improve internet connectivity in regional and remote WA
(Connectivity initiative)
- 

‘Train the trainer’ programs to improve digital skills
(Skills initiative)
- 

4. Online digital inclusion hub
for training resources
(Skills initiative)
- 

5. Provide re-purposed technology
to those who need it
(Affordability initiative)

Other popular initiatives

Free online access to Government and education websites
(Affordability initiative)

All in one place Government online services
(Design initiative)

Foster **industry partnerships** to provide **digital literacy training**
(Skills initiative)

Explore how Government can make technology **more inclusive for people with disability**
(Design initiative)

More information on initiatives can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Evaluating digital inclusion

Many organisations suggested ways we can measure the effectiveness of digital inclusion initiatives.

More information on these suggestions can be found in **Appendix 2**.

Taking a partnership approach to digital inclusion initiatives

78% of organisations would like to partner with the WA Government to improve digital inclusion.



3 in 4 people said their community faces at least one barrier to being part of partnerships.

“ Strong co-ordination and collaboration across government with one shared vision is needed for strengthening partnerships.

“ We agree with the partnership approach... we need a platform that connects everyone in this space.

What is needed to build strong partnerships?



1. Co-design

Government working with people and organisations, not for them.

“ People must be involved in the co-design of strategies to overcome many of the challenges that people currently face in accessing the benefits of technology.



2. Funding

For new initiatives and to help community members be part of partnerships.

“ Digital inclusion initiatives should be funded and should not rely on volunteers.



3. Leadership

A strong direction led by Government.

“ Strong co-ordination across government with one shared vision... please define and prioritise goals.



4. Don't recreate the wheel

Support existing initiatives that have good results.

“ It is important that new services are not set up alongside services that are already working. They should happen in places where there are gaps.

Government's role in improving digital inclusion in WA

The Draft Blueprint proposes the Government plays the following roles to improve digital inclusion in WA

Proposed Blueprint roles

- ➔ Providing leadership
- ➔ Building collaboration and partnership
- ➔ Delivering services, initiatives and policies
- ➔ Developing expertise
- ➔ Providing support and advocacy

We asked if there are any other ways Government can support digital inclusion?

You told us Government should also:

- Resource and implement initiatives
- Coordinate a collaborative approach
- Support existing digital inclusion projects
- Provide training



We need leadership – clarity from the State Government i.e. this is what digital inclusion is, this is what we're doing and here are the resources. We need resources and a clear direction to support us.

Appendix 1: Initiatives suggested by people, communities and organisations



Connectivity initiatives

- Offering more and better choices of Wi-Fi/data plans for consumers across WA
- Improving connectivity infrastructure for service providers, organisations, and businesses
- Improving the speed and reliability of internet connections
- Ensuring the security of existing internet and connection points



Affordability initiatives

- Increasing the availability of affordable ICT
- Connecting industry with refurbishment programs to reduce e-waste and provide ICT to those in need
- Reducing the price of/offering free digital skills training courses
- Continued funding and support for local organisations and service providers as they move online



Skills initiatives

- Embedding digital skills training in school curriculums
- Educating Western Australians on ICT hardware
- Providing practical skills training e.g. internet banking, online job boards etc.
- Ensuring that skills training programs are accessible and appropriate for all Western Australians



Design initiatives

- Ensuring that government websites are mobile/tablet compatible
- Increasing in-person support for those who are struggling to use online services
- Promoting equal navigation and ensuring that all webpages can be accessed in '3 clicks or less'



Other initiatives

- Promoting data and information sharing between government agencies and organisations
- Developing minimum standards for ICT hardware and internet connection

Appendix 2: Measures to evaluate the effectiveness of digital inclusion initiatives



Connectivity

- Speed and reliability of internet connections
- Number of visits on government websites
- Number of regional and remote areas that are able to utilise videoconferencing services



Affordability

- Percentage of household income spent on the internet and ICT
- Number of households with a data allowance exceeding minimum standards
- Percentage of people with an internet connection and/or ICT surpassing minimum standards



Skills

- Increased community confidence in the use of online platforms
- Number of skills programs and attendance rate
- Rate of participation in online services
- Change in demand for digital skills training



Design initiatives

- Results of usability testing with various demographic groups e.g. seniors, people with disability, CALD
- Number of accessible websites and publications
- Reduction in the number of requests for inaccessible material conversion



Other initiatives

- Demographic surveys
- Consultation and feedback from members of the community
- Improved metrics in priority groups identified in the Blueprint

Thank you

This Report will help us develop a Blueprint that is right for all Western Australians.

