

Digital Inclusion Manifesto

About this Manifesto

This manifesto has been developed by the 20/20 Trust after consultation with community and business organisations that recognise the critical importance of digital inclusion as the next step in New Zealand's journey towards a digital economy. We are all currently engaged in or are supporting digital initiatives that focus on the people in our communities who face the greatest risk of digital exclusion.

We believe that all New Zealanders should have affordable access to the internet and the necessary digital skills and confidence to enhance their learning and employment opportunities and to engage online with government, their whānau and communities.

What is digital inclusion?

A digitally included person is someone who has:

- Motivation to use the internet
- Access to the internet
- Core digital skills
- Trust in online services

Our Goals

1. All people living in New Zealand are able to fully participate in the digital world.
2. All New Zealanders have equitable access to digital technologies and online services to enhance their lives, irrespective of geographic location or ability.
3. 'At-risk' families are supported with access to the internet and the necessary skills to make effective use of online services.
4. Children have access to future-focused digital learning opportunities, including online access from their homes and digitally literate whānau to support their learning.
5. School leavers are equipped with work-ready skills, including digital skills.
6. New Zealand businesses employ digitally skilled people to improve productivity.
7. New Zealanders can use their digital skills to maintain a healthy lifestyle and respond positively to social challenges.
8. New Zealand seniors have access to digital technologies and the digital skills to remain connected with their families and communities.

Goal 1: Online participation

Connectivity challenge

New Zealand has one of the most advanced digital infrastructures in the world. The Government's Ultrafast Fibre Broadband (UFB) and Rural Broadband

Initiative (RBI) programmes are already delivering benefits to New Zealanders in terms of better and faster internet connectivity. Wireless services provided by the country's mobile phone providers are also having an impact in delivering quality broadband connections to remote and rural locations. The connectivity challenge, identified some twenty years ago, is rapidly becoming an issue of the past, although there are still challenges in many rural communities.

Goal 1: All people living in New Zealand are able to fully participate in the digital world.

Affordability challenge

But for some communities, especially low-income ones, the challenge is now affordability. Early internet services (albeit low speed dial-up services) were available for not much more than \$10 per month; today, entry-level broadband plans start at \$50-\$60 per month. But twenty years ago, the internet was a newly evolving technology of most interest to technologists and computer enthusiasts; most New Zealanders were happy to live without it. Today, the internet is recognised in some countries as a legal right¹ and in others, tops the consumer list of "bare necessities"². Overseas studies have now confirmed that there is a direct cost to consumers if they are not online, with estimates being as much as NZ\$1000 per year³.

80% of public service transactions online

The New Zealand Government has set a 'better public services' target that an average of 80 per cent of New Zealanders' with 20 of the most common public services will be completed in a digital environment by 2021⁴. In October to December 2016, 58% transactions with eight government agencies were being completed online⁵. The people who need to transact with government most frequently are typically the most digitally excluded.

Survey shows lack of digital skills

Another challenge facing New Zealanders is the lack of digital skills. A recent OECD PIAAC survey revealed that although New Zealand compared favourably with other countries, only 44% adult New Zealanders met a benchmark standard for "information processing in technology-rich environments", a metric that enables international comparisons of digital skill competencies⁶. The PIAAC survey is carried out in over 40 countries on a 10 year cycle; New Zealand was included in round 2 (2012-16) of the current cycle. While this provides useful data, a much more timely survey is needed to monitor progress.

¹ BBC (2010) *Finland makes broadband a 'legal right'* <http://www.bbc.com/news/10461048>

² Kavanagh, I. (2013) *The Internet Is Not A Luxury, It Is A Necessity*. Research commissioned by Disney ranked internet access as the number one bare necessity of life for Britons. <https://www.dcupgs.ie/the-internet-is-not-a-luxury-it-is-a-necessity/>

³ PwC (2009) *Champion for Digital Inclusion: The Economic Case for Digital Inclusion* http://parliamentandinternet.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Final_report.pdf

⁴ Corner, S (2017) *Government aims to increase digital citizen interactions* *Computerworld*, 28 August 2017 <https://www.computerworld.co.nz/article/print/626514/government-aims-increase-digital-citizen-interactions/>

⁵ State Services Commission (2017) *Result 10: New Zealanders can complete their transactions with government easily in a digital environment* <http://www.ssc.govt.nz/bps-interaction-with-govt#result10>

⁶ OECD (2016) *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills – Country Note for New Zealand* <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Skills-Matter-New-Zealand.pdf>

Critical thinking and problem solving

Our world is being transformed and will continue to change at an ever-increasing rate, driven largely by the explosion in digital technologies. In order to stay engaged in digital societies, people need to have 21st century literacies including collaboration and teamwork, creativity and imagination, critical thinking and problem solving. In a digital world where we have access to almost unlimited amounts of data and information, people need the skills to be able to think critically and use knowledge and information to make decisions affecting their lives.

What can Government do?

Government has made a start by recognising 'Connected and confident Digital New Zealanders' as a key goal in its Business Growth Agenda, *Building a Digital Nation*, and has identified a number of initiatives supporting this goal⁷. We call on government to develop and resource a whole-of-government Digital Inclusion Agenda, in collaboration with business, philanthropists and community organisations.

Goal 2: Equitable access

Rural communities

People living in rural communities, especially those living in low socioeconomic communities are digitally disadvantaged. Internet connectivity and performance is well below the standard of service available in urban areas. Furthermore, services that are available are often unaffordable for people on low incomes.

Goal 2: All New Zealanders have equitable access to digital technologies and online services to enhance their lives, irrespective of geographic location or ability.

People with disabilities

People with disabilities face similar challenges; they often need access to specialised equipment to engage online, and for many, this is beyond their means.

What can Government do?

Government is supporting rural broadband infrastructure through its Rural Broadband Investment (RBI) programme, but to date this has done little to improve the affordability of internet services for low-income rural communities. New low-cost wireless services are now available. These use existing fibre connections at rural schools but the community wireless providers need funding assistance to establish connections to homes. Government could provide this support as part of its RBI2 investment programme.

Government assistance with accessible technologies (e.g. hearing aids) is currently available for some people with physical disabilities, especially those with severe disabilities, but further specific financial assistance is required for digital technologies to ensure that no-one is prevented from accessing the internet, for example, as a result of their physical disability.

⁷ NZ Government, *The Business Growth Agenda: Building a Digital Nation*, March 2017

Goal 3: Support for ‘at-risk’ whānau

At-risk families

The Government’s social investment approach recognises the economic and social benefits of early investing in ‘at-risk’ families. People who fail to secure employment, end up in prison, or become long-term beneficiaries, not only have a diminished quality of life but also become a significant cost to the state.

Goal 3: ‘At-risk’ families are supported with access to the internet and the necessary skills to make effective use of online services.

Supporting whānau

The support of whānau is critically important for all children from their early learning years through to adulthood. Numerous government agencies and other organisations intervene to support ‘at-risk’ families through a variety of programmes, including the Ministry of Social Development’s Family Start initiative, Te Puni Kokiri’s Whānau Ora programme and The Great Potentials Foundation’s HIPPY programme. A common element of these programmes is the use of home visitors as intermediaries to intervene directly in the lives of ‘at-risk’ families and provide targeted support.

The missing element

The missing element is a digital dimension. Typically the intermediaries themselves do not have a high level of digital confidence and as a result are not equipped to advise and support families to make use of digital technologies for improving their lives.

What can Government do?

Government could collaborate with community organisations such as the 20/20 Trust to develop a national programme for digitally upskilling intermediaries who are supporting ‘at-risk’ families.

Goal 4: Future-focused Digital Learning

Online at home is essential

21st century learning relies on students having access to online learning resources at home as well as at school. The 2013 Census revealed that 20% of school-aged students (aged 5 – 16) do not have access to affordable internet in their homes. The *Computers in Homes* programme has helped nearly 20,000 families address this challenge during the last 17 years; not only have school-aged children obtained internet access in their homes but their parents have also become more digitally confident, with many using their new skills to secure a job⁸.

Goal 4: Children have access to future-focused digital learning opportunities, including online access from their homes and digitally literate whānau to support their learning.

40,000 unconnected families

Today, it is estimated that 40,000 households with school-aged children still do not have access to

⁸ 20/20 Trust (2017) 21% of families participating in the *Computers in Homes* programme during 2016-17 reported getting a full-time or part-time job in the 12 months following their graduation.

affordable internet in their homes. Many rely on their smartphones to access the internet, but the high cost of mobile data and the limitations of these devices preclude this as a serious option for learning. Without affordable internet access in their homes, up to 120,000 students remain disadvantaged for learning.

Spark Jump helps

The Spark Foundation is helping to address this challenge with their Spark Jump programme; in 4G and 4G 700 mobile coverage areas families with school-aged children are being offered a wireless modem at no charge and the opportunity to top-up their internet connections at only \$15 for 30GB (compared to typical mobile data plans of \$50 for 3GB).

What can Government do?

Government could reinstate and increase funding for *Computers in Homes*⁹ or similar programmes that increase the digital connectedness and capabilities of families with school-aged children. The Spark Jump programme currently relies on support from community organisations to identify eligible families and assist them set up their connections. These organisations rely on funding from other programmes to cover administration and training costs. Support from Government to cover these costs would accelerate the deployment of programmes like Spark Jump in low income communities.

Goal 5: Work-ready skills

Lack of work-ready digital skills

Employers are regularly pointing out that school leavers and other job seekers do not have work-ready skills, i.e. work experience, communication, driver’s licence, team work, being drug-free, life skills, personal wellness, academic achievements, managing money and workplace health and safety. But there is also an increasing call for digital skills. Business leaders have pointed out that few school leavers are able to produce any evidence of their digital skill capability.

Goal 5: School leavers are equipped with work-ready skills, including digital skills.

Perception versus Reality gap

While most young people entering tertiary education or the workforce believe they have computer skills, few are able to demonstrate they have the practical skills to use common workplace productivity tools such as word processing or spreadsheets. International studies have demonstrated a wide gap between digital capability perceptions and reality¹⁰.

What can Government do?

Government could require any government-funded ‘training for work’ programmes to mandate that providers embed digital skills training as part of their delivery.

⁹ A 2015 Review of *Computers in Homes* by independent consultants, Martin Jenkins, concluded that the programme offered value for money and aligned well with Government priorities; they recommended that the programme be scaled up to reach 5000 families each year compared to the 1500 supported in recent years.

¹⁰For example, a recent digital literacy study carried out by ICDL Asia in early 2017 - *Perception & Reality: Measuring Digital Skills in Singapore* – revealed that 88.5% of participants rated their skills ‘fair’ to ‘excellent’ but their average performance when completing a practical test was only 55%.

Goal 6: Workplace productivity

Low NZ workplace productivity

New Zealand suffers from low workplace productivity. According to a recent JBWere report, New Zealand has been in a productivity recession since 2012¹¹. Less than 25% of the increase in GDP this century is from productivity improvements - we are working “harder, not smarter”.

Goal 6: New Zealand businesses employ digitally skilled people to improve productivity.

Digital is the new literacy

Digital technologies are recognised today as the modern-day equivalent of earlier technologies such as electricity and the steam engine. But not only do businesses need access to these technologies, they also need to employ people with the right mix of business and technical skills to achieve effective use, and unlike some other skills, the rapidly changing nature of technology means that employees need ongoing training and support. Recent research by Randstad revealed that 50% of New Zealand workers recognise they need to acquire more digital skills in order to guarantee their future employability¹². New Zealand has 20-year history of workplace-based literacy and numeracy support; new digital literacy programmes are now required to address productivity challenges.

Overseas examples

New Zealand should take a close look at how other countries are tackling this challenge. A common element in many of the world-leading economies is the strong alignment between government and business in developing a highly skilled workforce. Singapore, for example provides financial incentives for employees in small and medium enterprises to engage in ongoing learning and upskilling¹³.

What can Government do?

Invest in workplace-based digital skills training to improve productivity.

Goal 7: Healthy Lifestyles

Online healthcare

Online technologies are increasingly being used to improve the quality of healthcare services and provide opportunities for New Zealanders to take more control over their own

Goal 7: New Zealanders can use their digital skills to maintain a healthy lifestyle and respond positively to social challenges.

¹¹ JBWere (2017), *NZ Equities: Voting with our feet*, 10 August 2017, <https://www.jbwere.co.nz/news-and-research/nz-equities-voting-with-our-feet/>

¹² Randstad (2017) *Research indicates digital skills shortage in New Zealand*, 20 February 2017 <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU1702/S00615/research-indicates-digital-skills-shortage-in-nz.htm>

¹³ Singapore’s SME Portal lists around 30 different funding schemes for businesses to upgrade the capability of their staff and business processes. <https://www.smeportal.sg/content/smeportal/en/moneymatters/grants.html>

health and that of their families. The internet is also being used to bring specialist healthcare services to small rural communities. A recent example is the remote general practitioner (GP) services being provided by live video to the Patea community in South Taranaki by doctors in the Far North¹⁴. Instead of seeing a doctor face to face, patients sit in front of two iPads and a TV where they can talk directly to a doctor based in Kaitia.

Digital confidence needed

Digital Health 2020 has been established by the Ministry of Health to progress a number of digital initiatives at both a central government level and by District Health Boards (DHBs). But with one or two exceptions¹⁵ there has been no focus on addressing the digital confidence of people seeking health advice.

What can Government do?

Develop an initiative in collaboration with DHBs and PHOs to ensure that everyone in need of health advice and support has the opportunity to develop their digital confidence and obtain access to digital technologies.

Goal 8: Connected Seniors

Seniors at risk of exclusion

Seniors (aged over 65) in many developed countries are recognised as being 'at-risk' of digital exclusion. Many services they have relied on, such as shops, dairies, government agencies, banks and post offices, have closed in local communities as services move online. Even staying in touch with family and friends has become a lot more difficult.

Goal 8: New Zealand seniors have access to digital technologies and the digital skills to remain connected with their families and communities.

Learning support

Families of seniors often try to help by gifting a tablet or other digital device, but typically they do not have the time (nor the patience) to support the learning. It is becoming increasingly common for seniors to seek this support from libraries. SeniorNet in New Zealand has also played an important role for the last 25 years in helping seniors build their digital skills and go online. But like many other organisations, SeniorNet has faced funding cuts and struggles to keep its services affordable to its members, even with a large voluntary contribution from the organisations' tutors.

Developing the skills

The Government funded Aotearoa People's Network Kaharoa (APNK) has served many communities

¹⁴ Burroughs, David, *Lance O'Sullivan sets up NZ's first virtual medical centre in town with no doctor*, Stuff Health, 23 July 2017 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/95005540/lance-osullivan-sets-up-nzs-first-virtual-medical-centre-in-town-with-no-doctor>

¹⁵ Tairāwhiti DHB contributed funding in 2016/17 to support a digital literacy programme for 'at-risk' young mothers; this involved helping them access a computer and the internet as well as training to use the technologies to solve problems. PHOs in the Bay of Plenty have also encouraged families they support to engage in digital literacy programmes.

for the last decade and continues to provide reliable internet access for many people (including seniors) who cannot afford a connection in their homes. However, the new challenge is not about infrastructure, but developing the skills of the nation to make effective use of the infrastructure.

What can Government do?

Reinstate sustainable funding for the SeniorNet organisation and build capability in public libraries to deliver just-in-time digital literacy programmes, such as Stepping UP. For those seniors who are largely housebound, assist the development of a national buddy network. A longer term goal would be include internet services at off-peak hours as part of the Gold Card.

Manifesto Supporters

This Digital Inclusion Manifesto has in principle support from a number of organisations, including:

