



...a program of the Axiom Education & Training Center

## Maine Digital Inclusion Initiative

Digital inclusion is a national priority in the United States, and increasingly, a priority in Maine. High-speed internet access is widely recognized as a necessity for full participation in today's society. Employers, educators, businesses, healthcare providers, and civic institutions expect people to have access to computers and broadband connectivity.

**Digital Inclusion** includes:

- Affordable Broadband
- Affordable Equipment
- Digital Literacy Training
- Public Computer Access

The National Digital Equity Center's "Maine Digital Inclusion Initiative" program promotes and advocates for Digital Inclusion. Included is the expansion of digital literacy services to traditionally underserved populations to provide job training/employment-related education as well as technology training to older adults. The program has engaged and trained digital literacy instructors to provide digital literacy instruction to adult learners for the next three years throughout Maine.

The University of Maine System is a collaborative partner, and hosts a "regional hub"—on each of its seven campuses that serve as learning and meeting sites. Another project partner is the Maine State Library and the 230 local libraries throughout Maine as learning center sites in local communities. We are collaborating with Adult Education programs, Older Adult/Healthcare agencies, and Economic Development organizations and other state government entities.

Digital Literacy assessment and skills training play a critical role in technology and workforce skills development that increase employability of program participants, improve job-seeking skills, and create a more highly skilled, job-ready workforce across Maine. The program also helps seniors "age in place" by offering classes and workshops on how to use technology tools that will help them remain in their homes, as they grow older.

Program participants receive personalized support along a scaffolded learning path that leads to life-long learning and the skills and resources to continue growth along their individual trajectories. They also experience far-reaching meaningful impacts through use of internet resources.

Some areas of impact are education, financial stability, improved health, reduced isolation and increased communication, improved access to information, and increased civic participation. In addition to gaining digital literacy, formerly socially isolated participants often develop relationships with other peers they can rely on for assistance. Among older adults, this reduces the occurrence of depression, and negative health affects over time.

Through digital literacy efforts, communities benefit from a more highly skilled workforce that help grow the local economy and perpetuate creation of economic opportunity. Innovation and technology throughout the state will be leveraged to significantly improve the lives of Mainers. The project is one of the first statewide Digital Inclusion programs in the country.

*The Axiom Education & Training Center, a 501c3 non-profit, has established itself as a nationally recognized Digital Equity, Digital Inclusion and Digital Literacy expert and rolled out its National Digital Equity Center program in September 2017. The National Digital Equity Center provides communities with the expertise needed to mobilize broadband technologies through digital inclusion, literacy efforts, education, resource planning, funding research, leveraging infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement. Over 9,000 residents and 1,000 businesses have received digital literacy training at more than 200 locations in Maine.*

For more information – [www.digitalequitycenter.org](http://www.digitalequitycenter.org) or email [info@digitalequitycenter.org](mailto:info@digitalequitycenter.org)