

Digital Engagement Project

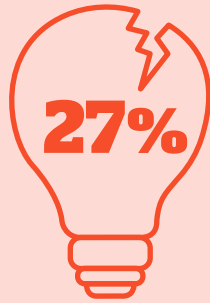
April 2022

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The Problem

In 2020, 27% of over 200 refugees we polled said they could not fully participate in online school, work or services because they had limited access to technology, or lacked the digital literacy skills to use it effectively.



The Intervention

With the generous support of the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, we launched the Digital Engagement Project - a one year pilot - aimed at bridging the digital divide with refugees in Waterloo Region.

Here's what we did:

Created a wifi hotspot loan program. We circulated wifi devices to households that needed them.



Gifted chromebooks to households who experienced financial or digital literacy challenges



Designed and curated a digital literacy course online, available in Arabic, Tigrinya, Somali and Rohingya

Paired tech buddy volunteers who spoke participants' native languages to support their learning



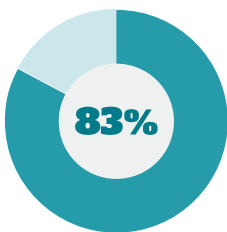
Made digital literacy training content available through our YouTube channel



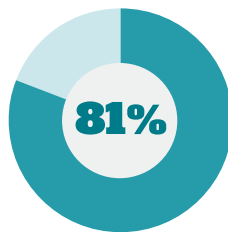
"It makes our life easier. We don't have a car, so transportation is an issue. It takes a very short time to get things done now [online]."

- Program Participant

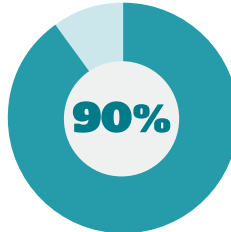
Evaluation Results



83% responded that having uninterrupted wifi through the hotspot loan was "very important" to their settlement



81% responded that their tech buddy helped a lot - keeping them motivated when they encountered set-backs in learning



90% said having the chromebook helped them feel less isolated

Participants reported that their new digital literacy skills equipped them to:

- Better navigate their new community
- Problem solve and complete tasks independently
- Feel more confident using technology in daily life

Takeaway

Digital equity and inclusion are an integral part of settlement. When digital literacy, tech access and support are incorporated into the settlement process, they lead to greater self-sufficiency, confidence, and opportunities.