NEW MEXICO ✦ **STATE LIBRARY**

1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87507 | nmstatelibrary.org | (505) 476-9700
A Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs

New Mexico State Library - Digital Needs Plan

December 23, 2023 (Updated May 1, 2025)

Section 1: Introduction and Vision for Digital Opportunity

The New Mexico State Library plans for a future where every resident, regardless of their background or location, has equal access to digital technologies, healthcare, job opportunities, government services, and digital services in libraries that support their personal growth and well-being.

Barrier 1: Lack of Broadband Availability

Objective: Bridge broadband gaps by enhancing library connectivity and advocating for infrastructure development.

Strategies:

1. Support the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion in engaging state and federal policymakers to prioritize broadband infrastructure investments for libraries.

2. Support initiatives like E-Rate and state broadband funding programs to make the internet more accessible and affordable for libraries.

3. Provide data and testimonials to demonstrate how improved library broadband benefits communities.

Sustainability:

- Establish ongoing collaboration with the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) through formal agreements (e.g., MOUs) to ensure libraries remain a key priority in broadband planning.
- Train library staff on how to apply for and maximize E-Rate and state broadband funding, ensuring they can navigate funding processes independently.
- Work with the state government to embed broadband access into library funding policies, making it a core part of operational budgets rather than a one-time initiative.
- Work with the state government to embed broadband access into library funding policies, making it a core part of operational budgets rather than a one-time initiative.
- Further support the development of the State Education Network and support the adoption of libraries.

NEW MEXICO ⬡ STATE LIBRARY

1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87507 | nmstatelibrary.org | (505) 476-9700
A Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs

Barrier 2: Low-Income Households Struggle to Afford Broadband Services, Devices, and Technical Support

Objective: Strengthen libraries as digital hubs by improving broadband affordability, expanding device lending, and providing hands-on tech support.

Strategies:

1. Increase enrollment in affordable connectivity and low-cost service offerings.

2. Expand affordable connectivity and low-cost service options.

3. Enhance access to computing devices and technical support.

Sustainability:

- Advocate for ongoing state and federal funding (e.g., E-Rate, BEAD, Digital Equity Act) to keep broadband and digital inclusion programs running.
- Work with state legislators to embed digital needs funding into library operational budgets rather than relying on one-time grants.
- Provide centralized procurement assistance so libraries can bulk-purchase and negotiate better deals on devices and connectivity solutions.
- Train library staff and volunteers to provide ongoing digital literacy and tech support to patrons, reducing dependency on short-term training programs.
- Create a statewide digital opportunity virtual meeting space where libraries can share troubleshooting tips, training resources, and digital inclusion strategies.
- Utilize the Connect New Mexico Digital Needs, Accessibility, and Inclusion network to partner with community-based organization and internal agencies to provide support to libraries.
- Integrate digital inclusion goals into community planning and development initiatives, ensuring long-term affordability considerations.

Barrier 3: Individuals Who Are Members of Covered Populations Require Support to Develop Digital Literacy Skills

Objective: Strengthen libraries as digital learning centers by offering tailored digital literacy training for covered populations.

Strategies:

1. Advocate for sustained funding (e.g., E-Rate, BEAD, Digital Equity Act) to ensure libraries can maintain affordable high-speed broadband.

2. Promote online safety and privacy practices.

NEW MEXICO ✦ **STATE LIBRARY**

1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87507 | nmstatelibrary.org | (505) 476-9700
A Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs

3. Utilize the E-Rate Wi-Fi hotspot lending program, allowing patrons to take internet access home.

4. Partner with New Mexico Technology Assistive Program to offer assistive technology (e.g., screen readers, adaptive keyboards) to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

5. Train library staff and volunteers to provide tech support and digital literacy training for patrons.

Sustainability:

- Establish an ongoing relationship with the state Office of Broadband to ensure state and federal policymakers continue funding for library broadband access and digital inclusion programs.
- Regularly track and report the impact of broadband funding on library services and community benefits to demonstrate the need for ongoing support.
- Incorporate digital safety and privacy training into library staff training programs, ensuring staff are well-equipped to teach patrons about online safety.
- Develop a library-specific online safety presentation that includes materials for patrons, staff training, and resources for local communities to improve their awareness of privacy issues.
- Seek additional partnerships with other disability services or tech companies to bring in new assistive technologies to expand options for library patrons.
- Secure statewide digital literacy certification programs for library staff and volunteers to ensure they have the skills to provide tech support and training on an ongoing basis.
- Offer train-the-trainer models so staff can share knowledge with each other and reduce dependency on outside training.
- Create peer-to-peer support networks for libraries to share best practices, resources, and tools for tech support across the state.

Barrier 4: Tribal and Local Communities Require Resources and Expertise for Digital Needs Efforts

Objective: Enhance the ability of Tribal and local communities to lead and implement digital needs initiatives through tailored resources and expertise.

Strategies:

1. Collaborate with Tribal leaders and local organizations to create customized digital needs training that respects cultural values and local needs.

2. Partner with Tribal governments, community-based organizations, and local leaders to identify specific digital needs challenges and opportunities.

3. Host virtual and in-person clinics where librarians can receive technical assistance on writing grants, managing projects, and securing funding for digital needs efforts.

NEW MEXICO ⬡ STATE LIBRARY
1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87507 | nmstatelibrary.org | (505) 476-9700
A Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs

4. Encourage feedback loops where librarians, Tribal leaders, and local organizations provide input on what resources, training, and expertise are most valuable to them.

Sustainability:

- Focus on building capacity with libraries and staff from Tribal organizations to become sustainable trainers.
- Integrate feedback mechanisms into the training process to ensure it evolves with libraries needs and digital technology trends.
- Build formal agreements and commitments with key partners (e.g., Tribal governments, local organizations) that include shared goals, responsibilities, and funding opportunities to ensure sustained collaboration.
- Engage not only Tribal and local governments but also private sector partners, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions that can provide additional resources, expertise, and funding.
- Ensuring digital needs initiatives are tightly aligned with existing local priorities such as economic development, education, or health care, ensuring that digital equity becomes part of the broader, ongoing community development efforts.
- Promote the integration of indigenous knowledge and languages into digital literacy programs, ensuring cultural relevance and preservation.
- Facilitate virtual and in-person events that become a permanent part of library staff professional development and offer sessions throughout the year or on a rolling basis.
- Incorporate digital access into the state library's long-term strategic plan, making it a core function of the library's mission and ongoing programming.
- Establish annual recognition and celebration events to honor local digital needs champions and achievements.
- Use social media, newsletters, and webinars to consistently communicate the impact and importance of these strategies, ensuring continued buy-in from local leaders, funders, and community members.

Section 2: Implementation and Measurable Objectives

2.1: Increase Access to Residential Broadband Infrastructure

Measurable Objectives:

1. Work with libraries to have librarians who can help spread the word about available broadband services, affordability programs, and digital literacy resources. The goal is to get more people involved in the 2025 Annual Report and increase the number of people attending workshops.

NEW MEXICO STATE LIBRARY

1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87507 | nmstatelibrary.org | (505) 476-9700
A Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs

2. Strengthening libraries as important community centers by training librarians to be digital guides, helping to carry out the goals in the state's Digital Needs Plan.

2.2: Improve Affordability and Accessibility

Measurable Objectives:

1. Train librarians as digital navigators to libraries, transforming them into enrollment centers to promote and facilitate affordable connectivity program opportunities.

2. Train librarians as digital navigators to serve as ambassadors, expanding communication about affordable connectivity and low-cost service options to all 98 library systems.

3. Assign libraries, delivery drivers, and partner organizations to help distribute computers, offer technical support, and provide train-the-trainer sessions at 130 libraries to make sure everyone has fair access to technology.

2.3: Empower Covered Populations Through Digital Literacy Skills

Measurable Objectives:

1. Train librarians to be digital guides who lead digital literacy programs, with the goal of getting everyone involved in the 2025 Annual Report and boosting digital literacy skills across the state.

2. Train librarians as educators on online safety and privacy practices, reaching all 98 library systems.

3. Task librarians at libraries advocating for and implementing improvements in online accessibility.

4. Build on current partnerships and create new ones with groups, agencies, and organizations that help improve the health and safety of New Mexicans.

2.4: Strengthen Local Capacity and Support Digital Needs Initiatives

Measurable Objectives:

1. Develop and implement digital navigation initiative tailored for libraries, supporting local digital needs efforts through capacity building by providing training, resources, and ongoing support to librarians and community leaders.

2. Integrate library-specific data and informational resources within libraries and working groups, aiding digital inclusion goals. This includes information on state and local broadband outcomes, affordability options, and digital literacy resources.

NEW MEXICO [image] STATE LIBRARY

1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87507 | nmstatelibrary.org | (505) 476-9700
A Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs

3. Continue advocating for and supporting telehealth services in libraries, including expanding dedicated spaces for health-related services and providing updated outreach materials.

Section 3: Collaboration and Outreach Strategy

The success of this plan depends on collaboration and engaging all key groups. This will involve regional meetings, statewide events, and focused outreach to all 98 library systems across the state. Strategies will focus on building partnerships with the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion, Department of Health and Human Services, community centers, Tribal governments, workforce development groups, the UNM Health and Information Science Library, the UNM Office of Community Health, and organizations dedicated to expanding digital opportunities.

Section 4: Conclusion

Closing the digital gap in libraries isn't just about having access to technology; it's about helping people gain new skills, think critically, and be active in the digital world. The New Mexico State Library, along with its partners, is focused on creating a future where everyone in New Mexico has the skills, tools, and chances to succeed in the digital age. This plan uses clear goals and strategies to close the digital divide and make New Mexico more connected and inclusive.

Written by Bo Ford, Digital Equity Program Manager, New Mexico State Library

With help from Eli Guinnee, State Librarian, New Mexico State Library