EDC UPSKILL
Digital Upskilling Training Program

CITY OF GOLETA **DIGITAL EQUITY PROJECT**

The City of Goleta Digital Equity Project offered training to improve digital literacy skills, technical support, and computing devices for local underserved populations, targeting communities of older adults, language learners, and small business owners. Hosted by the City of Goleta and funded by a generous grant from Central Coast Community Energy (3CE), the project involved partnerships with the Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) and Broadband Consortium Pacific Coast (BCPC), Women's Economic Ventures (WEV) and American GI Forum (AGIF). EDC provided the digital upskilling curriculum and resources, BCPC provided administration, and AGIF and WEV worked directly with community members, delivering digital literacy courses and providing technical support.

Digital Literacy and access to technological tools that advance literacy are integral to economic self-reliance and equitable participation in our communities, yet disparities in digital readiness persist in some communities more than others. According to the National Skills Coalition, 92% of jobs require digital skills. However, one-third of workers do not have the skills necessary for these jobs. A Pew Research Center report indicates that Latinx and Hispanic communities continue to fall behind in digital access, including connectivity, access to devices, and digital skills. Research out of the University of California Santa Barbara confirms a correlation between large-screen device ownership and success outcomes; yet in Hispanic/Latinx populations, which constitute 47% of Santa Barbara County, people are more likely to only have a smartphone

106	**8 Cohorts**	**63**
Students Served	Courses Offered	Chromebooks Distrubuted

as their primary Internet device and. Similarly, those with incomes of less than $75,000 are likely to be more smartphone-dependent than those with higher incomes. Immigrant populations are also more likely to benefit from investment in digital upskilling; according to Migrant Policy Issues, immigrants make up one-third of the workforce without digital skills.

NEED FOR THE INITIATIVE

Digital inclusion empowers aging adults, reducing isolation, and supporting independence.

Digital skills deficiencies disproportionately impact women, people of color and non-English speakers.

As technology changes, current workers need upskilling to stay employed.

All industries and employers need employees with basic digital skills.

"Over the past few weeks, I've learned new computing skills to better support my team. I track who moves in and out, help with paperwork, and notify tenants about changes. The class taught me a lot, and I'm still learning to streamline our filing. The teacher was very helpful, and receiving a free Chromebook was amazing!"
- Yolanda V.
Computer Basics Student

Without immediate action toward addressing the digital literacy needs of underserved residents of the tri-county region, these communities will continue to be unqualified or underprepared for high-wage, family-sustaining jobs that are crucial for a thriving, equitable local economy. As technology advances and is required for most facets of life, equipping community members with digital literacy skills helps to support their independence, reduce their isolation and emotional stress, improve their employability, increase their access to resources and services, and invest back into local economic growth in an equitable manner.

COMPUTER BASICS

COMPUTER BASICS REPLICATION TOOLKIT

ACCESS HERE

Curriculum and instructor tools are available **at NO-COST** in English and Spanish.

The Computer Basics course teaches adult learners the essential computer skills and confidence they need to navigate digital devices, be more technically proficient in the workplace, advance to better jobs and access additional training and education opportunities. Students learn the basic functions of operating a Chromebook, using a keyboard and mouse, using the internet safely, creating and using documents, using email and participating in video calls.

- **Short course increases participation: 6–8 weeks**
- **Small class size:** ~15 students
- Completers get to **keep their Chromebooks**
- West Ed's formal evaluation of the Computer Basics
  course found statistically significant learning gains 6 months after the course:
  - Graduates have the **confidence to try new things** using technology such as: paying bills, applying for jobs online, scheduling, accessing additional training opportunities

IMPACT

61
Students
Served

6
Courses
Completed:
2 in Spanish, 4 Bi-Lingual Instruction

54
Chromebooks
Distributed

71%
Students
Over Age 50

75%
Female
Students

90%
Primary
Language
Spanish

Students' Comfort
Using a Computer
increased from
39% to 95%

Students' Comfort
Using the Internet
increased from
48% to 100%

"I spoke with my wife about taking the classes, and we both decided to enroll. I don't know much about technology. I work as a dishwasher and want to get promoted to a waiter, so I need to learn how to charge customers using tech. I learned a lot from the instructors and want to keep learning more. Having a Chromebook is great. Thank you so much for this opportunity."
- Ruben A.
Computer Basics Student

EDC partnered with AGIF to facilitate the program's Computer Basics cohorts. AGIF has a rich history of strong commitment to civil rights and community service. Founded in 1948 by Dr. Hector P. Garcia, a World War II veteran and civil rights activist, AGIF has been dedicated to fighting discrimination against Mexican American veterans and promoting equal opportunities for all citizens. Through AGIF's Digital Inclusion initiative, over 4,400 households in California have been enrolled in low-cost internet services and gifted no-cost digital devices, and AGIF instructors have brought digital literacy training to over 3,200 community members. To recruit participants in the Computer Basics course, AGIF utilized social media outreach, a traditional press release, and direct outreach at local Swap Meets, foodbank distribution and Veterans' events, in addition to collaborating with the Boys and Girls Club, libraries, and the Housing Authority of Santa Barbara County.

The Computer Basics cohorts experienced low attrition but did not exceed target enrollment. The majority of students returning after the first week completed their coursework successfully. Enrollment barriers were attributed to insufficient time for outreach and community engagement along with identifying suitable course locations. AGIF hosted 2 of the 6 cohorts in Santa Maria, boosting enrollment across 3CE participating communities. Finally, the original project scope proposed 3 cohorts targeted to English Language Learners and 3 cohorts to Mature Workers. Due to low demand from Mature Worker cohorts, AGIF pivoted to offer 3 Spanish language cohorts and 3 English/Spanish cohorts. While 71% of enrolled students were over the age of 50, none identified as "Mature Workers" specifically.

To facilitate instruction, AGIF employed bi-lingual instructors with backgrounds in technical support, and participants benefited from the diverse expertise of fully credentialed teachers with vast experience in teaching. Instructors' efforts were supported by comprehensive instructor resources, accessible instructional pace, and easy-to-navigate curriculum modules offered through EDC's Digital Upskilling Training Program. Students reported increased comfort in using the internet and computing devices, as well as an immediate impact on their ability to work or have confidence to explore new work, and interest and enthusiasm for continuing education.

GET YOUR SMALL BUSINESS ONLINE

This nine-week course teaches small business owners and entrepreneurs the digital skills they need to get their businesses online and implement e-commerce to grow and stay competitive. EDC contracted Women's Economic Ventures (WEV) to support program design and deliver instruction. Students learn how to launch and create a business website, use email marketing, make their company searchable online (SEO), create and implement online marketing, implement e-commerce strategies, create social media content and develop a six-month action plan. The course is provided in English and Spanish and includes one-on-one advising with the EDC's Small Business Development Center and WEV business advisors.

"Thanks to the knowledge I gained in the Start Your Small Business Online class, I have been able to expand my business in the digital world. I learned about tools like artificial intelligence and ChatGPT, which allowed me to create a Facebook and Instagram page and secure my own online domain. I am so grateful for all the support I have received and am excited to continue growing."

-Gabriela M.
Get Your Small Business
Online Student

GET YOUR SMALL BUSINESS ONLINE REPLICATION TOOLKIT

AVAILABLE NOW

The Program is being expanded to other areas. Replication toolkit will be available soon.

IMPACT

2
classes provided
(1 in Spanish,
1 in English)

80
people trained
45 enrolled, 35 completed

82%
of participants are
female

>71%
of students are
people of color

62%
of participants' primary language is
Spanish

48
Average age
participant

WEV provided instruction and support for two learning cohorts of the Get Your Small Business Online (GYSBO) digital upskilling program for entrepreneurs. The first cohort was delivered from March to May 2024 in English at WEV offices and the second cohort known as "Pon Tu Pequeño Negocio en Linea" was delivered in Spanish from June to July 2024 at the Goleta Community Center. All class sessions were held in person with the option for English program learners to join remotely if necessary.

The GYSBO program teaches small business owners essential knowledge and skills needed to create, maintain, and grow their online business presence. At the end of the eight-week instructor-led training program, learners presented a personalized action plan for key strategies they will implement to boost their business' online presence. 100% of respondents to the English language post- program assessment (n=13) rated the overall quality of the program as good or very good (76.9% very good and 23.1% good). Three Spanish language program participants completed the post- program assessment with 100% of respondents rating the program as very good.

Several best practices were established in the two GYSBO cohorts. The Spanish course instructor increased success rates by pairing students who were not as skilled in using a computer with those who were more comfortable using a computer. This pairing allowed for learners to support each other in a way that felt empowering and supportive for both parties. To accommodate the shifting needs of small business owners, learners in the English-

language GYSBO course attended some meetings remotely, if necessary, allowing for a higher completion rate. The Spanish-language cohort was not offered the same accommodation because the technology set-up at the Goleta Community Center limited remote access. Finally, instructors provided printed course workbooks to learners to take notes and follow the curriculum in a non-digital manner to help with key concept retention.

WEV's GYSBO cohorts met target enrollment goals by 116%. Twenty-one individuals enrolled in the English program, with eighteen people successfully completing it, and twenty-four people enrolled in the Spanish language program, with seventeen people successfully completing it. This low attrition rate can be attributed to the quality of the program, the instructors as well as the camaraderie and accountability to complete the program gained via in-person sessions. The success of GYSBO relative to target enrollment is attributed to WEV's experience administering this course in Ventura County and maintaining a robust interest database of community members seeking to enroll. This enabled WEV to easily enroll 150% of their goal and though the cohorts saw 22% attrition, completed students still exceeded enrollment goals.

The City of Goleta Digital Equity Project programming commenced in March 2024 and concluded in September 2024. Overall, 106 community members participated in programming in 8 learning cohorts, and 64 Chromebooks were distributed to participants who requested them. The program accomplished 84% of the device distribution goal because most GYSBO students had a personal computing device already, with only 25% requiring a device to successfully complete their courses. All students in Computer Basics cohorts received a device upon completion. In addition to offering digital literacy training and device distribution, a primary objective for the project was to enroll participants from eligible households in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and provide education and enrollment support on available programs. Due to a lack of Congressional funding, ACP enrollment ceased after February 2024. In response, AGIF provided support for enrollment in alternative low-cost internet options.

OVERALL IMPACT

Computer Basics, New to Tech:

43%
of Students Were **Residents of Goleta**

6
Courses Completed: 2 in Spanish, 4 Bi-Lingual Instruction

72%
of Target Enrollment Graduated

36%
of Students Were Located in **North Santa Barbara County**

64%
of Students Were Located in **South Santa Barbara County**

Get Your Small Business Online:

46%
of Students Were **Residents of Goleta**

2
Courses Completed: 1 in Spanish, 1 in English

116%
of Target Enrollment Graduated

8%
of Students Were Located in **North Santa Barbara County**

92%
of Students Were Located in **South Barbara County**