Equipping Americans with skills for the digital age
Table of contents

4  Introduction

5  Training the digital workforce

6  The Goodwill Digital Career Accelerator® concept:
Five skill levels for the digital workforce

8  Measuring the progress of the Goodwill Digital
Career Accelerator®

9  Spotting local impact

20 Overcoming job seeker challenges

24 Opportunities to explore data-driven solutions

26 Working together to expand economic opportunity for all
Since 2017, Grow with Google and Google.org have supported Goodwill’s job training programs, which help Americans learn the digital skills they need to grow their careers. Now we’re looking at the impact of these programs and exploring ways to encourage smart investments in the digital skills space.
Today’s job market is changing dramatically. In just one generation, technologies have transformed nearly every business and workplace, creating a new class of in-demand workers: the digital workforce. According to a 2017 Brookings report, nearly two-thirds of all new jobs created since 2010 required either high- or medium-level digital skills.¹

People with digital expertise — ranging from keyboarding to advanced programming — have the potential to open more doors, increase their wages, and change the trajectory of their careers. Even many entry-level jobs, in almost every industry, now require basic proficiency in computing and digital communication. Without these basic abilities, job seekers struggle to find employment. This hits traditionally underserved populations the hardest, as these communities face the highest barriers to digital training.

This rapid digitalization of jobs creates a new challenge: how to best help people learn the digital skills they need to succeed.

¹ Brookings, Digitalization and the American Workforce, p15
Training the digital workforce

Google.org supports programs that put technology to work to solve complex human challenges. This support ensures that everyone has access to the digital economy and is prepared to effectively navigate our increasingly digital world. As part of these efforts, we've supported nonprofit organizations and researchers to improve the state of job training. In 2017, Google.org provided support to Goodwill, which reaches more than two million people per year, to explore ways of better equipping Americans with digital skills. This support of Goodwill is a part of the Grow with Google initiative, Google's program to remove barriers to digital skills training.

Goodwill helps people, regardless of education level or economic background, reach their potential through learning and the power of work. It provides basic skills development, occupational skills training, and job placement assistance to move people into medium- and high-wage jobs in every industry. Goodwill works with all groups, including veterans and military families, people re-entering society from the justice system, adults and young people, job seekers and current workers, and opioid-impacted communities. It also provides programs in rural areas, where skills training often isn’t readily available. Each year from 2014 to 2017, one out of every 200 people who found work in the U.S. did so with Goodwill’s aid. But as jobs rapidly digitize, Goodwill needed to rethink how to effectively help people succeed in the digital economy.

As part of the launch of Grow with Google, Google.org announced our support for the creation of the Goodwill Digital Career Accelerator® (GDCA). Aiming to jump-start career opportunities for 1.2 million people by 2021, the GDCA helps Goodwill reshape how it responds to the digital economy, with support from Google's tools, resources, and talent. This initiative is backed by a $10 million Google.org grant and access to the Google IT Support Professional Certificate, a first-of-its-kind online program from Grow with Google that teaches skills for a career in IT support. The success of the GDCA is also bolstered by over 1,000 Google volunteers. Some of these volunteers are training Goodwill clients on digital skills, by providing résumé coaching or mentoring Goodwill beneficiaries. Other volunteers are working directly with Goodwill to help address its toughest technical challenges, such as changing how it uses data, while creating a roadmap for other training providers to make data-driven decisions.

Goodwill in numbers

- **161** local, community-based organizations across the U.S.
- **288,000** people found work through Goodwill in 2017
- **36 million** people accessed Goodwill’s online learning services in 2017
The Goodwill Digital Career Accelerator® concept:
Five skill levels for the digital workforce

Thanks to the technical support of Google volunteers and Google.org funding, Goodwill created the GDCA. This led to the development of a five-level framework to define the digital skills continuum. Throughout the first year of the ongoing grant, Goodwill provided training across all five skill levels and tracked impact using this framework:
The GDCA five skill levels framework

**Level 1** of the GDCA provides an introduction to computers and information about the digital skills needed in today’s workplace. This includes activities such as digital skills assessments and job fairs for digital roles.

**Level 2** focuses on basic computer skills, such as keyboarding, computer safety, and using the internet, email, and social media. It also covers job search skills, including creating résumés, filling out online job applications and searching online for jobs and training.

**Level 3** provides basic office training, including common productivity tools such as word processors and spreadsheets. This level supports the foundational skills required for most jobs in the digital economy.

**Level 4** teaches the digital skills needed for entry-level occupations, covering computer and network support, basic programming skills, digital media and design, and social media.

**Level 5** focuses on mid-level digital skills that are often occupation-specific, such as those within healthcare technology, customer relationship management, and machining technology.
After one year of the GDCA grant, Goodwill is already seeing training programs gain momentum and drive impact. The grant has enabled Goodwill to provide digital skills training to thousands of people and has helped:

- 27,682 job seekers find employment
- 252,025 job seekers gain an introduction to digital skills
- 88,262 job seekers take basic training in digital skills
- 16,398 job seekers learn productivity software skills
- 2,865 job seekers complete entry-level digital skills training
- 1,261 job seekers acquire mid-level and occupation-specific digital skills

The GDCA program is currently active in 93 Goodwill organizations across 34 states. In 2019, Goodwill plans to roll the program out to additional Goodwill organizations, bringing the total to 126 Goodwills across the U.S.

*Numbers based on best available data and validated by Mission Measurement*
Spotlighting local impact

The national scale of the GDCA provides a unique opportunity to understand what’s working in digital skills training. Looking back at the impact, ten Goodwill organizations stood out as innovators. Some have broad reach while others took original approaches to training. The following stories highlight how these Goodwills are supporting local communities across the country, as well as the success of some of their job seekers.
Goodwill of Central and Northern Arizona

PHOENIX, AZ

Goodwill in Phoenix, Arizona, took a community-focused approach to building its digital skills training. By acquiring a deep understanding of its most-in-need job seekers and employers in the local area, it effectively designed its curricula to meet these varied needs. This led Goodwill Phoenix to focus on four groups — unskilled, underemployed, veterans, and employers — to develop its computer and customer service programs. It used the GDCA to launch classes in Basic Computer 101-103, as well as offering the Northstar certification and the Google IT Support Professional Certificate program. Because the software systems used in its retail stores require basic digital abilities, Goodwill Phoenix also relies on its basic digital skills training programs to hire qualified retail employees.

**Number of people reached**

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**Number of people who found employment**

- 3,083

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Elaine: Turning setbacks into opportunities

When Elaine suffered a stroke, she decided not to let her impaired cognitive and physical abilities hold her back. She was determined to rebuild her confidence and find a job in retail. She visited Goodwill Phoenix to get help updating her résumé and searching for local jobs. Even with an improved résumé, Elaine still couldn’t find work. But she never gave up. Elaine enrolled in Goodwill’s digital skills program and began with Computer Basics 101, where she learned to navigate the internet and use word processing tools. After a few weeks, Elaine was learning more advanced skills, like navigating operating systems and spreadsheets. She wanted to finish her studies with proof of her new abilities, so she took the Northstar certification exam. Shortly after passing the exam, Elaine found a job as a retail cashier, helping her rebuild her confidence and broaden her work experience.

*Full rollout of program levels 4 & 5 currently in progress.*
Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey, Inc.

ASTORIA, NY

In Astoria, New York, cost of tuition, transportation, and housing can prevent adults from completing training courses or paying for certifications. Goodwill is tackling this by offering tuition-free tech leadership training to adult learners. They currently work with NPower, an IT-focused skills training provider, and Pursuit, a four-year tech fellowship, to help move job seekers into New York’s robust tech industry. These partnerships equip people with a broad range of digital skills, such as productivity software, customer service skills, and all levels of computer science; including full-scale app development and multi-language programming.

Simone: Finding career satisfaction

Simone loves to work with people, dedicating more than seven years to patients as a home health aide. But she dealt with inconsistent work hours and pay that fluctuated with her clients’ varying needs. She wanted to make a change but, with only a high school diploma, she felt unprepared for a new career. While applying for public financial assistance, she was referred to Goodwill’s career services. In September 2018, she took her local Goodwill’s week-long customer service and call center training course, where she learned basic computer skills, internet navigation, and keyboarding skills. This led to a new job as a remote receptionist. With the support of Goodwill, Simone feels that she has started a promising career, not just a job. She enjoys having a reliable income and loves the stability it brings to her life.

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Number of people who found employment: 709
Using the GDCA grant, Goodwill in Roanoke, Virginia, explored creative solutions to reach communities with high crime rates. The resulting Digital Access Project built trust within traditionally underserved populations via a transformative community outreach model. Guided by an outreach coordinator, the project focuses on teaching locally in-demand digital skills, such as basic G Suite classes, TechTime (a technology awareness program for at-risk middle-schoolers), and Network+ training. It has also improved the quality of digital skills training available via professional development courses for instructors.

Number of people reached

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Number of people who found employment

| Level 1 | 591 |

**Brandon: Becoming a role model**

Brandon spent three years in the U.S. Army Reserves, where he learned discipline and persistence, two characteristics he was seeking to grow following legal troubles. He expected the Army would put him on a brighter path but, unsure of his next steps after leaving the Reserves, he struggled with substance abuse. Becoming a father changed everything for Brandon. Wanting to give his daughter the best upbringing he could, he committed to turning his life around. With encouragement from his partner, who was taking courses at Goodwill, Brandon enrolled in Goodwill's technology training program. Here he gained an IT certification and the Google IT Support Professional Certificate. This led to a paid internship in Goodwill’s IT department and, eventually, a full-time job as a Goodwill help desk support technician. Brandon’s supervisor describes him as a fast learner and a valuable team player. Since starting his new role, he has earned his Network+ certificate and is studying for his Security+ certificate. Through Goodwill training, Brandon put himself on track to career success. There’s only one thing he’s more proud of: being an outstanding role model for his two-year-old daughter, Layla.
Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania

PITTSBURGH, PA

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Goodwill uses the GDCA to provide digital literacy assessments and badging through the Northstar Digital Literacy Project. This allows Goodwill Pittsburgh to provide customized learning to its students and make data-backed decisions on its curricula. This location also offers seven-week basic computer classes, workshops in productivity software, and 50 scholarships to the Google IT Support Professional Certificate. Additionally, Goodwill Pittsburgh hired a digital skills coordinator to develop curricula and oversee training and reporting.

Number of people reached

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Pamela: Staying relevant in the digital workplace

Baby boomer Pamela has always been fascinated by computers, but she found them daunting to use. She knew that she needed digital skills to stay competitive in today’s job market. However, she had little time to focus on training; she worked full-time at a local flea market while supporting her son, who was struggling at school. Realizing her son needed additional support, Pamela took him to classes at Goodwill. That’s where she heard about the free seven-week basic computer course that teaches people in-demand digital skills. She took the course and earned the Google IT Support Professional Certificate, as well as certificates in technical support fundamentals and computer networking. Goodwill also helped her revamp her résumé to include the skills she’d learned, such as problem-solving and computer safety. Equipped with these new digital abilities, Pamela secured a rewarding job as an information and communication technology trainer for homecare workers. In her new role, Pamela is passing on the digital skills she learned. She leads three-hour courses teaching homecare workers tools like timesheets and patient portals. With flexible hours and a 50% pay increase, she’s excited to continue supporting her son and to encourage others to learn digital skills.
Goodwill Industries of Kansas, Inc.

WICHITA, KS

In Wichita’s sparsely populated rural areas, poor public transportation makes it difficult for those most-in-need of digital skills to travel to Goodwill classes. So, Goodwill brought classes to them. The GDCA allowed Goodwill to transform an RV into a mobile training lab and take learning to 35 rural communities across the state. Fitted with 10 computer stations and managed by a full-time program coordinator, this mobile training lab brings locally in-demand digital skills — including productivity software, G Suite, and social media networking — to more Wichita residents.

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| Number of people who found employment | 209 |

Mary Jane: Fast-track to a new career

When Mary Jane moved to Wichita from the Philippines with her husband and three children, she dreamed of starting a career in aviation. But without a U.S. GED®, she had some hurdles to overcome first. WSU Tech connected Mary Jane with NexStep Alliance, Goodwill’s education division, where she completed her GED® and took digital skills classes. Mary Jane learned basic computer navigation and software skills, like word processing, via Northstar’s basic computer skills course. She also used Google Classroom and Aztec Learning Software to take on challenges outside her classes. Mary Jane’s hard work was recognized when she won the State of Kansas’ Silver WORKReady! Certificate. She also received an Accelerating Opportunity program scholarship, which allowed her to study at WSU Tech and complete a sheet metal assembly certification. Thanks to Goodwill, Mary Jane earned the qualifications to help her find work quicker than she ever thought possible. She’s now begun a new career at an aircraft manufacturer.
Goodwill Industries of Tulsa

TULSA, OK

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Goodwill used the GDCA to assess, evaluate, and improve the quality of its training. This thoughtful approach to using data to provide the best training to local learners led to a seemingly simple, but hugely impactful change: an adjustment of Goodwill’s course times. Much of Goodwill Tulsa’s target population is underemployed. Evaluation revealed that, for these participants to fit training around their work schedules, they needed more evening and weekend courses. Additionally, this evaluation prompted Goodwill Tulsa to hire more staff, develop its classroom curricula, and partner with local business leaders to increase workplace retention rates.

George: Acing the digital job search

George, a 51-year-old U.S. military veteran, easily adapts to new challenges. But when he was laid off from his job of 20 years, he found that his limited digital skills hindered his job search. So George used his Army training to turn the obstacle into an opportunity. After six months of searching and applying for jobs, he identified the weakness — his digital skills — and took steps to improve, enrolling in Goodwill Tulsa’s IT training program. After completing the baseline digital skills assessment and taking computer support technician training, George enrolled in the Google IT Support Professional Certificate. His prior work experience helped him quickly translate what he was learning to his IT career aspirations, and he encouraged other students by sharing his real-world experience. His hard work and determination soon paid off; in January 2019, George accepted a job as a senior technical support engineer. In his old job, George worked on a single ‘legacy’ system, but now he’s responsible for managing multiple telecom systems.

Number of people reached

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Number of people who found employment

| | Number of people who found employment |
| | 1,063 |
Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

Goodwill in Indianapolis, Indiana, created The Excel Center, a unique tuition-free high school for adults. It helps adult learners acquire leading credentials and digital skills while earning a high school diploma. And this is only one of the ways Goodwill Indianapolis is ensuring that the local future workforce is digitally savvy. Goodwill also built an IT career pathway program, which is accessible to all learners in its education program and offers a formal certificate. In 2019, Goodwill Indianapolis will expand its offering to include healthcare technology certifications and courses in medical billing and coding.

Number of people reached

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Number of people who found employment

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Clinton: Combining work and learning

Clinton has always been fascinated by computers and wanted to work in software development. But, with no formal coding experience, he didn’t know how to springboard to a new career. Working for ClickGoodwill’s e-commerce location gave him the opportunity. After Clinton shared his career aspirations at work, Goodwill connected him with Kenzie Academy, a coding and design school that offers six-month to two-year programs in user experience design and software engineering. Thanks to GDCA funds, Clinton earned a front-end developer certification at Kenzie Academy, where staff quickly recognized his leadership ability and hired him as a student coach. Clinton is now both a student and a part-time employee of Kenzie Academy, taking 6-8 hours of classes per week, and recently earned a back-end engineer certification. In his new student–employee job, Clinton has successfully launched himself into a new IT-focused role, and he loves coaching other students toward success, too.
At Fort Worth, Texas, the GDCA helped Goodwill transform a classroom into a digital workshop learning environment. Equipped with laptops, a touchscreen table, and a smart TV to cast any computer screen, this forward-thinking approach to digital training engages students through first-hand experiences with innovative digital tools. Goodwill has also carefully tailored its curricula to local learners, hiring bilingual trainers and offering courses in both Spanish and English.

Femeka: Skills to grow a business

As a small business owner, Femeka knows the power of determination. For her, failure is simply not an option. So when she realized her limited digital skills were preventing her from growing her personalized gift basket business, she took steps to change this. After seeing a flyer for Goodwill’s digital skills program at a local women’s shelter, Femeka quickly called Goodwill Fort Worth to enroll. Challenging herself to learn more, she completed courses in basic computing, internet navigation, productivity tools, and G Suite — all in just a few weeks. Femeka used these new skills to grow her business, market her company online, and use Google Docs to create an online order form for her gift baskets. A few months later, she is now doing something she never before thought possible: using her digital skills to build a website for her company.

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In Nashville, Tennessee, Goodwill used smart partnerships to broaden its impact in the local area. This allowed it to expand outreach to veterans, youth, and homeless populations. Additionally, it hosted Google for Job Seekers seminars, where a Google employee held an IT Tech Talk with Goodwill students and students from local colleges. Goodwill also expanded its breadth of training to offer the Google IT Support Professional Certificate, G Suite training, and guidance in using online job searching tools. With future updates to equipment planned, Goodwill Nashville is aiming to reach an even larger audience.

**Number of people reached**

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**Number of people who found employment**

| 181 |

*Chelsea: Building a new foundation*

In 2018, Chelsea and her two young daughters lived in a homeless shelter for three months. “It was the most difficult time I’ve ever faced,” Chelsea said, remembering how she’d reassured her daughters by telling them that they were on a camping trip. She then began working as a Goodwill office manager, where she enrolled in the Goodwill IT certificate and received a scholarship funded by Google.org. Chelsea said that without tuition support she wouldn’t have been able to enroll in the program. Fast forward to 2019 and Chelsea is now a data technician at Google’s data center in Clarksville, Tennessee, nearly tripling her previous salary. She can now provide for her daughters via a sustainable new career.
Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand Rapids

GRANDVILLE, MI

In Grandville, Michigan, Goodwill has expanded opportunities for underserved communities via targeted outreach for the GDCA. To help move students into work faster, they hired a business engagement specialist who focuses on building relationships with local employers. Goodwill has also helped more students achieve IT certifications by establishing a dedicated lab for every IT certification training group. This popular lab guides students in designing their own computer using shelf parts. The success of these programs has allowed Goodwill to reach more communities often underrepresented in IT, such as women, racial minorities, people with disabilities, and military veterans.

Zaira: Turning passion into a career

While taking classes at Grand Rapids Community College, Zaira’s friends often turned to her for computer help. Her natural aptitude for computers soon turned into a passion for technology. But when her brother needed help to afford school, she put her own education on hold to work full-time. Zaira eventually earned a degree, but soon discovered that her lack of hands-on experience in technology was stopping her from finding the right job. Zaira signed up for Goodwill’s IT certificate program, which gave her IT basics and taught her other work skills, such as strong teamwork. Goodwill’s training encouraged Zaira to restart her online job search. She now works as a configuration technician, where she helps companies migrate to new operating systems. She uses many of the skills she learned through Goodwill, such as troubleshooting issues with system access, network configuration, and software functionality. And Zaira’s ambitions didn’t stop there. She’s now enrolled in Goodwill’s Network+ certificate class and hopes to soon move to her employer’s security information team.
Overcoming job seeker challenges

In collaboration with Goodwill, we recently conducted more than twenty interviews with local Goodwill organizations around the country to better understand the GDCA’s impact after one year. This helped surface the challenges faced by local Goodwill leaders, coaches, and GDCA program participants, and highlighted how they’re overcoming hurdles. Through these conversations, a few lessons rose to the top.
Rethinking digital skills training

During the first phase of the Google-supported Goodwill Digital Career Accelerator® (GDCA), Goodwill learned what works in digital skills training. Read on to discover the challenges local training providers face and how Goodwill has worked to address them.

**Challenge #1**
People struggle to navigate a sea of training options

Since workforce development services are spread across multiple providers, people seeking skills often didn’t know where to find training to advance their careers.

Some Goodwills co-located job services with other training providers, such as job centers. This gives job seekers a one-stop place to find information about training and services.

**Solution**

**Challenge #2**
Training providers find it hard to build trust in underserved communities

Reaching and developing trust within underserved communities can be difficult, especially when branching out to new offerings like digital skills.

In some locations, Goodwill employed trusted community outreach workers to relay the value of Goodwill’s training programs to underserved populations.

**Solution**

**Challenge #3**
People mistake mobile literacy for digital mastery

Since most people regularly use mobile phones, many job seekers believe they’re already competent in digital skills. This leads to misconceptions about workplace digital readiness.

Goodwill incorporated a baseline capacity assessment to explain the differences between mobile literacy and workplace digital readiness.

**Solution**

**Challenge #4**
Many people feel intimidated by learning digital skills

Many learners believe digital skills training is much more advanced than traditional job skills.

Learning about digital skills training through one-on-one sessions in a familiar Goodwill neighborhood location can help learners feel less intimidated by new concepts.

**Solution**

**Challenge #5**
Transportation barriers are widespread, but often inadequately addressed

Many learners struggle to attend training because transportation is not accessible, available, or affordable, yet few training providers offer transportation support.

Goodwill is finding creative ways to tackle transportation barriers, for example, providing bus pass stipends, matching class times to bus schedules, or bringing classrooms to students via vans or pop-up classes.

**Solution**

**Challenge #6**
Instructors struggle to identify the best training

Training providers are often unsure of how to assess the quality and effectiveness of training programs, materials, and training approaches.

Goodwill fosters opportunities for instructor peer learning, particularly around best practices, and what has and hasn’t worked in digital training.

**Solution**

**Challenge #7**
Training programs often overlook the basics

Many job training programs unintentionally exclude people with low digital literacy by assuming a basic level of digital readiness that many people don’t have.

Google.org helped Goodwill to create a robust framework to assess digital training needs, identify gaps in training, and define entry points for individuals without basic digital skills.

**Solution**

**Challenge #8**
Job seekers struggle to demonstrate digital skills learned

Learners often finish digital skills training with little evidence to demonstrate their new skills to employers, particularly for basic digital skills.

Mapping Goodwill’s digital skills training to employer-validated credentials helps job seekers provide evidence of their new skills.

**Solution**
Scaling the solutions

This is only the beginning. As we look to the remainder of Google.org and Goodwill’s work together, we plan to help Goodwill increase the GDCA’s impact by building on what works in digital training. We also aim to support Goodwill in sharing these best practices with other digital skills training providers.

Challenge 1: People struggle to navigate a sea of training options.

By co-locating job services at other training providers’ facilities, such as community colleges and job centers, Goodwill made it easier for learners to find the courses they need. As a result, this helped boost enrollment and ongoing involvement in training. Additionally, many providers don’t offer digital skills training and their staff often has limited expertise in technology. Co-locating job services let Goodwill expand the training offerings of other providers to cover essential digital skills while helping Goodwill reach a broader audience.

Challenge 2: Training partners find it hard to build trust in underserved communities.

A thoughtfully implemented “community outreach” model is more effective in reaching in-need individuals than “traditional” communication strategies. By recruiting community members as Goodwill ambassadors and partnering with community leaders who have expertise in marginalized populations, Goodwill effectively builds relationships in these areas. Because outreach workers are already trusted individuals in communities, they can relay the value of Goodwill’s training programs to their peers.

Challenge 3: People mistake mobile literacy for digital mastery.

Baseline capacity assessments allow Goodwill instructors to demonstrate that mobile literacy doesn’t translate to workplace digital skills. However, once instructors have dispelled the misconception, smartphones can become a powerful way to reach otherwise “offline” populations. While in-person touchpoints are critical to build relationships and provide hands-on practice, mobile technology equips learners to continue practicing skills between in-person classes; for example, via smartphone apps or online instructional videos for on-the-go learning.
Challenge 4: Many people feel intimidated by learning digital skills.

Learning digital skills can be scary. Instructors and coaches have to dedicate substantial resources to overcome these fears. Goodwill can play a unique role here. While other training providers, like colleges, can seem daunting, the familiar Goodwill brand and common retail locations lower the barrier to entry for many. Seeing the immediate application of digital skills and technologies in store-adjacent training equips instructors to open doors for new learners. Additionally, some Goodwills have found that they can help nervous learners feel more comfortable by replacing group introductory sessions with one-on-one training. They then shift learners to group classroom settings, which helps students increase confidence in their skills and also enhances program sustainability.

Challenge 5: Transportation barriers are widespread, but often inadequately addressed.

Transportation barriers are widespread in both rural and urban communities, but few training providers offer transportation support. Goodwill has experimented with three main solutions: 1) supporting access to existing transportation links, for example, through fuel or bus stipends or by scheduling training around bus availability; 2) strategically locating training facilities along bus routes; and 3) bringing training to students via mobile or pop-up classrooms. While it’s sometimes necessary to meet students in their communities, such as in extremely rural areas, these programs are resource intensive. Supporting existing transportation is often a more scalable approach.

Challenge 6: Instructors struggle to identify the best training.

Instructors often learn best practices and effective training approaches from their peers. To ensure instructors are using training materials that teach students the most locally-in-demand digital skills, Goodwill supports knowledge sharing by hosting events that serve as forums to spread effective best practices. Online tools can be developed to support this valuable communication. For example, digital curricula repositories, contributed to and reviewed by local instructors, could help improve awareness and use of the best learning materials.

Challenge 7: Training programs often overlook the basics.

A multi-level digital skills framework, such as the five levels of the GDCA, gives Goodwill instructors a common way to assess their training offerings, identify gaps, and tailor their courses to learners’ needs. For example, before using the five-level framework, many local Goodwill organizations didn’t offer basic computer skills or highlight that their courses taught those skills. In these instances, the framework helped define the entry point for individuals with no basic digital skills, inviting previously underserved populations to participate.

Challenge 8: Job seekers struggle to demonstrate digital skills learned.

Learning digital skills is critical for job seekers, but they also need a way to demonstrate their new skills to potential employers. By mapping Goodwill’s digital skills training to employer-validated credentials, Goodwill helps job seekers demonstrate the competencies they’re developing. This is especially beneficial for basic digital skills, which don’t often include a formal assessment or credential.
Opportunities to explore data-driven solutions

These learnings highlight a number of friction points to solve for at scale. Looking ahead, we have a few big ideas for how to advance digital skills training approaches more broadly, which we think can significantly boost impact. Based on learnings from Goodwill, here are a few ideas we encourage digital skills stakeholders — including policymakers, funders, and training providers — to explore.
Surfacing the best-quality training
Instructors need easy access to high-quality teaching materials. A simple-to-use tool for exploring available digital training resources — such as lesson plans, courses, and online training modules — would take steps toward making the best third-party training aids universally available. By integrating this tool with a framework like the five-level GDCA and partnering with organizations that are centralizing digital training materials, this tool could even intuitively match instructors with the right curricula.

Powering coaching with artificial intelligence (AI)
Learning shouldn’t be confined to the classroom. Students learn best when education is ongoing and on-demand. Design explorations show that nudges over text messaging can improve retention in mobile learning, while artificial intelligence can increase the effectiveness of these prompts. By investing in AI-powered technologies, such as chatbot coaches, training providers can offer students better, more customized learning, available where and when students want it.

Open-sourcing labor market insights
Open data is key to understanding local markets, employers, and learners. While open data sources exist, such as Census data, they’re limited and not provided in real time. More advanced, real-time resources are expensive and, therefore, often inaccessible to nonprofit training providers. By open-sourcing labor market data, training providers benefit from better visibility into the people and markets they’re serving. Additionally, Goodwill’s data-driven decision-making model, which uses third-party advanced labor market data, can illustrate the importance of up-to-date, market-specific labor data.

Sharing data talent
When data-driven organizations share their data insights, they spread knowledge of what works. Additionally, sharing data talent — such as software engineers and data analysts — with nonprofit training providers streamlines data collection and reporting processes. The Google.org Fellowship program, which has placed seven data fellows at Goodwill organizations, can serve as a blueprint to encourage tech organizations to invest in digital training providers.

Reimagining train the trainer
Many instructors struggle to stay current on the rapidly changing digital skills landscape. These providers would benefit from further opportunities for professional development. Provider-targeted training could help them upskill on best practices, effective instructional strategies, and approaches for increasingly digital curricula. Additionally, a certificate in training digital skills could help instructors who are new to online and hybrid learning acquire the skills to effectively teach their students.
Working together to expand economic opportunity for all

We’ve already taken positive steps toward ensuring Goodwill’s digital skills training is high-quality, driven by local needs, and widely accessible. But by working together to solve the biggest challenges in the digital skills space, we can help further expand economic opportunity for everyone.
In fact, Google.org recently announced a new way of working across the social sector. In January 2019, in addition to the support of 200 Google volunteers to date, seven Google employees started working full-time for Goodwill. This initiative is part of the Google.org Fellowship, which allows Google employees to work pro bono with Google.org grantees for up to six months. Embedded at Goodwill organizations in places like Austin, Kalamazoo, and Louisville, these Google employees are helping Goodwill use advanced labor market data to tailor services to the needs of local workforces, smartly allocate resources, and understand what works in job training programs. This data-driven approach can amplify the long-term impact of Goodwill’s work while demonstrating what’s possible through partnerships with tech experts.

We’re excited to help Goodwill build upon the GDCA and to support other organizations that are positively shaping the future of work. By supporting efforts to expand access to digital training and technical expertise, the GDCA is helping to advance the work of digital training providers.
Equipping Americans with skills for the digital age

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