

# Digital Literacy Audit Tool

*Using a digital literacy lens to improve service delivery*

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During the global pandemic, services needed to move online quickly. While this created some advantages, putting services online also caused unintended barriers.

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## Did you know...?

### Not everyone has access to the *internet*

Only 64% of low-income Canadians have access to the internet at home. Many low-income people rely on free Wi-Fi. The cost of cellular data limits access to the internet on devices.

### Not everyone has access to *digital devices*

Many people rely on places like public libraries for computers or printers. When those places are closed or inaccessible, they do not have access to online information and services.

### Not everyone has the *literacy skills to read online text*

17% of Canadian adults are at or below the lowest level of literacy, meaning they can use short texts to find one piece of information.

### Not everyone has the *digital skills & confidence to navigate online*

Anyone, even people with strong literacy skills, can have gaps in their digital skills. Lack of digital skills and confidence is a barrier for people from all walks of life.

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Just because something is accessible ONLINE...

...does NOT make it accessible to EVERYONE.

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The Digital Literacy Audit Tool will help you and your organization...

- Reflect on service delivery through the lens of digital literacy, equity, and access.
- Uncover unintended barriers in your service delivery.
- Follow the “BOTH/AND” principle to make your services available to all your clients by being accessible BOTH online AND offline/in print.

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## Introduction

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### What is digital literacy?

ABC Life Literacy defines digital literacy as “having the knowledge, skills and confidence to keep up with changes in technology.

Computers are increasingly part of everyday life. They’ve changed how we do things, and they’re going to keep changing how we do things.

To keep up, we need to keep learning so that we can continue to thrive at home, at work and in the community.

Being digitally literate means being able to adapt to the changes brought about by computers in ways that make sense to your life.”

### What is a digital literacy audit?

A digital literacy audit supports organizations who are considering how to reduce the impact of the digital divide on their clients and increase accessibility to services.

It helps you...

- Systematically reflect on your organization’s digital practices through a digital literacy lens.
- Identify and affirm what you already do well as an organization.
- Reveal and address unintended barriers you may be creating for your clients.
- Consider what changes to your organization’s systems and processes will support people of all levels of digital access and skills to better use your services.

### Who is this tool for?

Anyone who works in public-facing organizations, such as: businesses, community organizations, government departments, and social serving agencies.

### How do I use this tool?

The Digital Literacy Audit Tool contains four sections, each with reflective questions and statements for your organization to consider.

Consider this both a short-term and long-term exercise in raising awareness and making change. As such, you can do all four sections together or focus on one or more particular sections at a time. This tool can be revisited regularly as a reminder to keep digital literacy, equity, and access in mind.

In general, follow these steps:

1. Gather staff from your organization. Have people work individually or in teams.
2. Reflect on the section's starting questions and make notes of the responses.
3. Use the rating scale to assess your organization's current practices.
4. As a group, discuss the reflections and ratings.
5. Consider any changes you, your team, or your organization could make to reduce the impact of the digital divide on your clients.
6. Identify and prioritize goals. Consider short, medium, and longer term goals. Include clients and other stakeholders in the goal setting process as appropriate.
7. Create an action plan. Review it regularly to stay on track. Celebrate successes.

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*This Digital Literacy Audit Tool was developed to compliment the Opening Doors Literacy Audit Toolkit, created by Literacy Alberta, which helps organizations bring a literacy lens to their work to better serve their clients. For more information on the Opening Doors Literacy Audit Toolkit, contact the Community Learning Network ([calp.ca](http://calp.ca)).*

## Section 1: How does your organization COMMUNICATE with clients?

**Remember:**

- Not everyone has the *literacy skills* to read online text**

**Take a moment to think about your organization’s practices:**

- What do you know about how potential clients learn about your services? (posters, brochures, advertisements on public transit, social media, etc.)
- How do clients contact your organization? What unintended barriers might make it difficult for them to receive your services?
- Do clients need to go to a website to learn more or use digital tools to access services? What messages are implied because of the role of technology in accessing services?

**Using the following rating scale, check the ONE response that most accurately describes your organization today:**

- A - We are doing this consistently.
- B - We are doing this, but we could make some improvements.
- C - We are not doing this, but we should be.
- N/A - Not applicable

	A	B	C	N/A
1.1 It is easy to find our phone number on all marketing and promotional materials, and all communications.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.2 Calls to our organization are answered by staff who direct people to services, rather than by an answering machine with a navigational menu.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.3 We make every effort to avoid putting clients on hold because we recognize many of our clients can only afford limited access to data and/or minutes on their digital devices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.4 We write all our digital content in plain language because not everyone has the literacy skills to confidently read online text.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.5 We do not require clients to fill out online documents or other forms (such as waivers) before coming to the office.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.6 We make all documents and forms available in print format to be mailed, picked up, or filled out with help from a staff member.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.7 We offer clients the option to book appointments directly with staff rather than using online booking tools.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.8 We ask clients how they prefer to be contacted (e.g., phone call, text message, email, specific app such as Facebook, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Section 2: How do clients use the INTERNET to access your services?

**Remember:**

- Not everyone has access to the *internet***

**Take a moment to think about your organization’s practices:**

- What do you know about your clients’ access to the internet?
- How and where do your clients access the internet? How do you know this?
- How do you ensure your services are accessible to your clients? Are any of your services available only online?
- How have you worked with clients to address the digital barriers they face? What workarounds are you using to address clients’ issues around ***lack of internet?***

**Using the following rating scale, check the ONE response that most accurately describes your organization today:**

- A - We are doing this consistently.
- B - We are doing this, but we could make some improvements.
- C - We are not doing this, but we should be.
- N/A - Not applicable

	A	B	C	N/A
2.1 Our clients can receive all our services even if they do not have access to the internet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.2 Our website has a simple, short address (URL).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.3 Key information on our website can be accessed easily with as few clicks as possible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.4 Our clients can access all of our documents and forms even if they do not have access to the internet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.5 We have free Wi-Fi available for clients at our location.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.6 It is easy for clients to find the Wi-Fi code and password at our location.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.7 We design our website and any downloads to be optimized for low bandwidth connections (i.e., quick loading web pages, small sized document files).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Section 3: How do clients use DEVICES to access your services?

**Remember:**

- Not everyone has access to *digital devices***

**Take a moment to think about your organization’s practices:**

- What do you know about the digital devices your clients use (e.g., simple phone, smartphone, tablet, laptop, public shared desktop, printers, scanners) and how they use them? How do you know this?
- How have you worked with clients to address the digital barriers they face? What workarounds are you using to address clients’ issues around ***lack of devices***?

**Using the following rating scale, check the ONE response that most accurately describes your organization today:**

- A - We are doing this consistently.
- B - We are doing this, but we could make some improvements.
- C - We are not doing this, but we should be.
- N/A - Not applicable

	A	B	C	N/A
3.1 We ensure all our communications are designed to be mobile-friendly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.2 We design our online forms to be filled out on a mobile device and to be free of large graphics and logos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.3 We make our forms and documents short to reduce data usage and costs for mobile users.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.4 We have a system to allow clients to print or scan their documents related to our services, because we understand they may not otherwise have access to these tools.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.5 We have a system to lend digital devices to clients and/or for clients to access devices at our location.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.6 We gather input from clients about their experience using their device to access our information and services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section 4: How do clients use DIGITAL SKILLS to access your services?**

**Remember:**

- Not everyone has the *digital skills and confidence* to navigate online**

**Take a moment to think about your organization’s practices:**

- What do you know about your clients’ digital skills and the amount of support they need to access your services? How do you know this?
- How have you worked with clients to address the digital barriers they face? What workarounds are you using to address clients’ issues around ***lack of skills***?

**Using the following rating scale, check the ONE response that most accurately describes your organization today:**

- A - We are doing this consistently.
- B - We are doing this, but we could make some improvements.
- C - We are not doing this, but we should be.
- N/A - Not applicable

	A	B	C	N/A
4.1 We avoid complex words and/or we explain the terms we use when we talk about digital services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.2 We have a system in place to support clients with questions around the digital skills they need to access our services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.3 We know where to refer clients for help addressing digital barriers beyond our service mandate (e.g., accessing technology, devices, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.4 We know where to refer clients to access learning opportunities for strengthening their digital skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.5 We gather feedback from clients to understand their experience of our digital communications.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.6 There are always options clearly available for clients who cannot access our services online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>