

NATIONAL DELIVERY PLAN

OVERVIEW

2023

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INTRODUCTION

The UK is at a unique moment in time as all aspects of life, including how we learn, how we participate, and how we transact are being shaped by digital technology. At this critical juncture we could advance as a truly 21st century digital nation where everyone is enabled and engaged, or leave large proportions of our society ever further behind, with all the negative consequences for them, the economy and society as a whole. We firmly believe that future generations will view how we address what we have termed 'digital poverty' as one of the defining features of the next few years.

The scale and pace of change inevitably means that addressing this challenge goes beyond what individual organisations, companies or government departments can achieve working in isolation. An interconnected digital world requires an interconnected strategy. There is much that we can build on:

- There have been tremendous and generous responses from communities, organisations and from individuals and whilst this has always been well-meaning, it has often lacked the support and access to information and resources needed to effect real, lasting and positive change for people.
- The relatively low costs of devices and connectivity especially when compared to the financial, social and other benefits that can accrue to individuals and families.
- The network of individual digital champions and local organisations already exists in substantial form across the country with thousands more who are ready and willing to help through volunteering and await guidance on the best way to approach this.
- Leadership can be found across the UK from major metropolitan mayors such as those in Greater Manchester and Leeds, and from local authorities and neighbourhood volunteers. What is lacking is leadership on this matter at national government level. Leadership and national strategies are already in place in Scotland and Wales and the same is now needed in England and in Northern Ireland.

The Digital Poverty Alliance aims to maximise the impact of these endeavours, sharing what works, and, most importantly keeping a laser-like focus on what works for hard-pressed individuals and families, so our collective actions are coherent and we simplify rather than confuse. That is the fundamental rationale behind our National Delivery Plan which outlines six core missions to end digital poverty by 2030.

The plan endeavours to set out in some detail the required response and identifies needs and possible responsibilities. Of all of these we would like to highlight two:

- The urgent requirement for a new UK-wide Digital Inclusion strategy to update and replace the 2014 version.
- A call to develop an integrated programme shared by all sectors of society to ensure that national investment in all areas from healthcare to education and employment to travel is fully realisable through ensuring everyone can benefit and engage.

We are living through a period of tremendous transition. Inevitably our plan will need to adapt to changing political, economic, social and technological circumstances. We will need to be flexible and not overcommit on the basis of a hazy understanding of what the future might bring. The plan sets the direction of travel, we hope you continue to work with us on the next steps of the journey.



Paul Finnis, CEO at the Learning Foundation and Digital Poverty Alliance



Niel McLean, Chair of Trustees at the Learning Foundation

A PHASED APPROACH TO 2023

The National Delivery Plan outlines an initial roadmap for ending digital poverty by 2030. We will use a phased approach that provides the basis for immediate action over the short term and a framework for action over the long term. The steps taken during the initial phases will inform the development of subsequent phases.

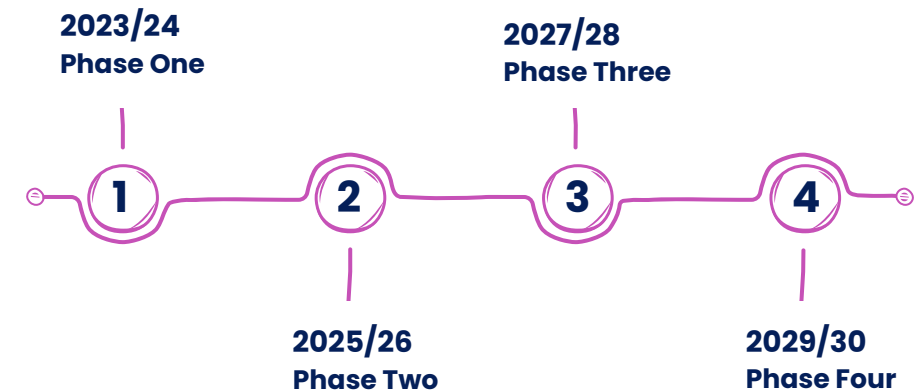
An action summary is included in the appendix of the full National Delivery Plan document. It breaks down the key actions for delivery in 2023/24 and actions that need to happen by 2030. For each of the actions, we have identified 'key stakeholders' who we identify as important to take actions forward. In some cases, these are organisations that have agreed to take actions forward. In other cases, we have identified organisations that we think are well-placed to do so. At this stage, we have identified 'key organisations' rather than 'action owners', but we hope that more explicit designations around action ownership will be incorporated into subsequent versions of this plan. As key stakeholders may differ depending on national contexts, we have defined key stakeholders across Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland where relevant.

To ensure that the plan remains responsive to changing circumstances, detailed timelines for activity will be refreshed on a two-year cycle. As this plan involves collaboration between governments, employers, and civil society, it is difficult to predict when each action will be completed. However, the DPA and its community of members will work together to use all available levers to compel action.

To achieve this, we will establish a new National Delivery Committee (NDC) that will be responsible for monitoring progress against the NDP. The NDC will comprise members of the existing DPA Community Board. The DPA convenes a broad cross-section of individuals and organisations committed to ending digital poverty. As independent organisations with their own strategies and priorities, NDC members will be in a better

position to support some actions rather than focusing on them all. We hope, however, that by providing a regular forum to focus attention on the National Delivery Plan, progress against key actions can be made.

Additionally, we will publish an annual progress review report outlining the actions that have been achieved and provide an overview of any changes made to the core plan. The objective of the review report is to ensure visibility and transparency on the progress of actions in the plan. It will provide a mechanism to assure stakeholders, including the public, that the actions identified in the plan are being implemented and to determine where further action is needed across all sectors.



At the start of each new phase, the progress of actions is evaluated, and the plan is appraised to ensure continued alignment with mission themes based on the current context.

OUR PROCESS TO DEVELOP THIS PLAN



Underpinned by consultation, engagement and review with DPA Community Board and Learning Foundation Trustees.

THREE KEY MESSAGES AND SIX MISSIONS

The National Delivery Plan represents the culmination of the work of the Digital Poverty Alliance (hereafter referred to as the DPA) to date. We have engaged extensively with stakeholders across public, private and third sectors to produce this plan. This has resulted in the development of six missions to end digital poverty by 2030. The chances of successfully delivering the actions have been evaluated based on our awareness of existing work and our assessment of how straightforward the implementation process will likely be.

Key messages	Evidence Review recommendation	Mission	Chances of successfully delivering actions for 2023/24	
End digital poverty together. We need a UK-wide digital inclusion strategy and an integrated programme to provide sustainable and affordable access to all.	Support for the whole journey	Increase awareness across society about the need for sustainable and strategic action to end digital poverty.	The chances of achieving the 2023/24 actions are high as we can leverage a broad coalition of supporters committed to increasing awareness about ending digital poverty.	Green
	Affordable and sustainable inclusion	Ensure affordable connectivity and guarantee full digital access for those in need.	The chances of achieving the actions for 2023/24 are moderate . Signposting and awareness will improve, but commitments to increase data and device donations are uncertain.	
Digital access is a basic right. We need cross sector collaboration to ensure that everyone has the support, capability, and confidence to navigate the internet, both now and in the future.	Inclusive and accessible design	Improve standards of accessibility, safety, and inclusiveness across all digital products and services.	The chances of achieving the actions for 23/24 are moderate . Actions build upon existing work to improve media literacy and ensure accessibility across digital public sector services.	Orange
	Skills to engage and empower	By 2030, significantly reduce the proportion of individuals without essential digital skills and ensure the sustainability, and expansion, of these skills in response to changing technologies and needs.	The chances of achieving the actions for 2023/24 are moderate . While raising awareness about the significance of digital skills is feasible, other actions require external commitments that need further consultation and engagement.	
Empower people and communities. We need to expand our knowledge of what works and empower local communities to develop, coordinate and scale support to end digital poverty.	Building the evidence base	Enhance knowledge and understanding of digital poverty among all stakeholders, including citizens, governments, and the public and private sectors, through the development and utilisation of research.	The chances of achieving the actions for 2023/24 are high . They build on existing work, including the MDLS project, proof-of-concept projects, and work to improve the signposting to research.	Green
	People-centred and community-embedded interventions	Increase local capacity to provide joined-up digital inclusion support to individuals and communities.	The chances of achieving the actions for 2023/24 are high . The focus for 2023/24 will be to understand how digital inclusion interventions, delivered locally, can be supported and scaled.	

MISSION ONE

Increase awareness among government, politicians, industry, and the public about the need for strategic and sustainable action to end digital poverty.

We aim to unify and strengthen the coalition advocating for an end to digital poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic brought digital poverty into the national consciousness, yet the inequalities that the pandemic so brutally exposed have not receded; if anything, the need for action has only become more urgent. We need to build cross sector support for action to end digital poverty once and for all.

The key aspects of this mission include:

- **Engaging in joined-up advocacy** focused on digital poverty in the run up to the **next general election** and establishing an **action to end digital poverty day**. To achieve this, we must unite behind a shared vision for sustainable action and work to enhance the visibility of the issue in both media and political discourse.
- **Working with employers** across all sectors, both public and private, to take action to embrace digital inclusion. This will include asking **employers to sign a charter for commitments** to end digital poverty.
- **Advocating for a long-term UK-wide digital inclusion strategy** underpinned by a **sustainable funding model**. Ideally the strategy would be owned by the Cabinet Office, however, irrespective of government ownership it is essential that a new strategy sets out a clearly defined policy direction, and clear and robust mechanisms to measure and report on progress. Alongside this, there must be **clear ministerial responsibility** for digital poverty and digital inclusion within **Westminster** and across the **devolved governments**.
- **Building awareness** and providing support to the public to navigate the transition to an increasingly digital world. Over the long-term, there are several trends which will impact digital inclusion: the move of television from broadcast to online, long-term pressures on the NHS, the upcoming PSTN phone network switch off and financial services moving online. We believe these factors present the ideal opportunity for an **integrated programme** of **digital inclusion** across public, private and third sectors.
- To support this, we will work with DPA members and stakeholders to make the **economic and investment case** for why industry and government must financially support digital inclusion and enable existing support to scale.

Actions for 2023/24 (Phase 1)

- 1.1 Set up NDP committee.
- 1.2 Develop a strategy for targeted advocacy to raise awareness about digital poverty in the run-up to the next general election.
- 1.3 Produce a charter for businesses to commit to sustainable action to end digital poverty.
- 1.4 Businesses to sign the charter by May 2024.
- 1.5 Establish an "End Digital Poverty" day.
- 1.6 Initiate work to build the economic investment case for an integrated programme for sustainable digital inclusion.

Actions needed by 2030 (Phase 2-4)

- 1.7 Deliver a full business/investment case for digital inclusion.
- 1.8 Improve signposting for employers to resources on embedding digital inclusion across workforce.
- 1.9 Advocate for a new UK-wide digital inclusion strategy.
- 1.10 Advocate for ministerial level responsibility for digital inclusion.
- 1.11 Government, industry and third sector to develop a model for an integrated programme.
- 1.12 National digital inclusion funding settlement to support stakeholders to increase capacity.
- 1.13 Ensure digital inclusion is embedded in the UK government's public procurement policies and practices.

MISSION TWO

Ensure affordable connectivity and guarantee access to devices and connectivity for those in need.

The UK has a well-developed ecosystem and infrastructure to support individuals with access to data and devices. However, in the context of the cost-of-living crisis more people are struggling to stay connected. Action is needed to guarantee that everyone can get online in a way that meets their needs.

Key aspects of this mission include:

- Making the case to **employers and individuals** that more support is needed to **donate devices** to help individuals who are digitally excluded.
- Advocating for **UK governments** to guarantee **devices, connectivity, and support** to individuals at the **highest risk of digital exclusion** and work to **improve signposting** to existing support.
- Ensuring that everyone has access to **centres for supported digital access**. This will build on the work of the Good Things Foundation Digital Inclusion Network as well as ensuring the provision of safe and inclusive environments for people to get online through libraries, community centres and digital hubs.
- Advocating for **government, internet service providers and wholesale providers** to reach a long-term and sustainable agreement on a co-funded **industry-wide social tariff**. This agreement would need to be underpinned by action on marketing and promotion by internet service providers, removing penalties for mid-contract breaks, and guaranteeing sufficient and reliable speeds.
- Advocating for government to **reduce the VAT** rate charged on **all internet bills to 5%** to reflect the status of the **internet** as an **essential utility**. This could be replaced with a digital inclusion levy to fund an agreement on social tariffs and the device, connectivity, and support guarantee for those at the highest risk of digital exclusion.
- Encouraging **internet service providers** to **build on and scale** initiatives to provide **data and support** to individuals who are **digitally excluded**.
- **Governments across the UK** must also ensure universal access to **digital devices** for **pupils** who face **digital exclusion** within the education system.

Actions for 2023/24 (Phase 1)

- 2.1 Raise awareness among all employers and tech users about donating devices for reuse.
- 2.2 Improve signposting to available schemes for support with devices and connectivity.
- 2.3 Promote awareness of sources of support for local groups or organisations wanting to address data poverty and device poverty.
- 2.4 Internet service providers to pledge to expand data donation initiatives to help those in need.
- 2.5 Scale up the provision of centres for facilitated digital access funded by new government investment.

Actions needed by 2030 (Phase 2-4)

- 2.6 Government must ensure all communities can access a strong, reliable internet connection.
- 2.7 Investigate options for reducing VAT on broadband and mobile bills to 5% and implementing a digital inclusion levy.
- 2.8 Advocate for the removal of VAT on social tariffs.
- 2.9 Agreement between Government and ISPs for a co-funded industry-wide social tariff.
- 2.10 Creation of a government entitlement to free connectivity, devices and support to priority groups at highest risk of exclusion.
- 2.11 Develop proposals to ensure universal access to 1:1 devices within the education system.
- 2.12 Advocate for DfE to conduct an evaluation of the Get Help with Technology scheme.

MISSION THREE

Improve standards of accessibility, safety and inclusiveness across online services.

Ensuring accessibility, safety, and inclusiveness is crucial for enabling everyone to interact fully with the online world on their own terms. While there have been significant advancements in making digital services more accessible there is much work to do. To achieve this, we need a cross-sector mandate that ensures all individuals have the support to access online services in a way that suits their needs. Alongside this, we must prioritise efforts to ensure that the online world is as safe and inclusive as possible.

Key aspects of this mission include:

- To **raise awareness** about the **importance of accessibility** and **inclusive design** across all digital services, including through **testing** with individuals who are **digitally excluded**.
- To ensure that **public sector websites** and services offer **assisted digital** access at minimum and that service design incorporates a wide range of perspectives and capabilities.
- **DPA** will work with **members to advocate for organisational websites** to comply with **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) accessibility standards**.
- For **Ofcom** and the UK Government to build on existing work to **promote media literacy** and training at **all stages of life** and to ensure that **media literacy strategies** are reviewed and refreshed.
- To **create** a more **responsive mechanism** for **enforcing accessibility requirements**, **Ofcom** should **conduct reviews** on **non-public sector websites** for **accessibility standards**, with the **power** to **issue fines** to websites that repeatedly fail to implement guidelines. This would provide a more proactive approach to enforcement and would help to incentivise private sector organisations to prioritise accessibility in their digital services.

Actions for 2023/24 (Phase 1)

- 3.1** Raise awareness and understanding about the importance of accessibility in digital product and service design.
- 3.2** Build on existing work through the online media literacy strategy to ensure media literacy education and training is accessible to all.
- 3.3** GDS and Cabinet Office to build on existing work to ensure all public service websites and applications have the highest standards of accessibility.
- 3.4** Encourage DPA members to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility guidelines, subject to further consultation.

Actions needed by 2030 (Phase 2-4)

- 3.5** Develop mechanisms to incentivise developers to ensure accessibility compliance.
- 3.6** Ofcom and Government to develop a mechanism to enforce public sector accessibility regulations across non-public centre digital services.
- 3.7** Policymakers across the UK to review existing support available in relation to assistive technology.
- 3.8** Produce a regular monitoring report of adherence to WCAG compliance standards across websites and applications of non-public sector digital service providers.
- 3.9** Advocate for digital service and product design to include testing by people with low or no digital skills.
- 3.10** Ensure all offline options are protected for those that are unable or unwilling to access digital services in both public and private sectors.
- 3.11** To build on work to facilitate greater levels of algorithmic transparency.

MISSION FOUR

By 2030, significantly reduce the proportion of individuals without essential digital skills and ensure the sustainability, and expansion, of these skills in response to changing technologies and needs.

Developing digital skills is a complex process that requires substantial expertise and resources. It is crucial that digital skills interventions are adaptable to different contexts, capabilities, expectations, and needs, rather than being generic and discrete.

Despite a full range of initiatives, programmes, and support for people to access digital skills support and training, the overall level of foundational digital skills across the UK population has not changed significantly over time. Action is needed to ensure we have a sustainable system for essential digital skills acquisition and development that is inclusive of all abilities.

Key aspects of this mission include:

- To **build** on and identify **opportunities to scale** the range of both **formal and informal digital skills support** that is delivered across education institutions but also by charities, community groups, social housing providers and more.
- Ensuring that **employers** across all sectors can play a crucial role in promoting digital inclusion by **pledging to establish digital champions programmes** within their organisations, especially across high-priority sectors like healthcare.
- Ensure that **schools, FE colleges and universities** have the **capability and capacity** to successfully **embed digital** throughout **all phases of education** including through increased training for teaching staff.
- Developing the concept of a **tech ambassadors programme** within **schools and FE colleges** to help build digital skills and improve digital inclusion.
- Undertaking an initial **expert led review** of **high priority areas** where **digital skills training** will have the biggest impact in **addressing social inequalities**.
- Advocating for an **independent review** of the **essential digital skills landscape** to **assess** how **support** can be most effectively provided to those who are **digitally excluded**. This must include a review of the support available, the funding available and an evaluation of mechanisms to produce a long-term and sustainable plan for addressing the essential digital skills divide.

Actions for 2023/24 (Phase 1)

- 4.1 Ensure the Digital Skills Council prioritises action on essential digital skills.
- 4.2 Raise public awareness of the importance of digital skills and available support.
- 4.3 Expand digital champions programmes within organisations.
- 4.4 Undertake initial scoping review of high priority areas where digital skills training can help reduce social inequalities.

Actions needed by 2030 (Phase 2-4)

- 4.5 Explore options for a pan-UK insight-sharing forum in relation to essential digital skills.
- 4.6 Ensure requirements to boost essential digital skills are integrated into local skills improvement plans.
- 4.7 Support programmes that build the digital skills of frontline public service staff, civil servants and third sector staff.
- 4.8 Advocate for additional support to be provided to schools and colleges to embed digital successfully including for the provision of 1-1 devices for children across the UK.
- 4.9 Advocate for tech ambassadors programme within schools and FE colleges.
- 4.10 Advocate for a review of the essential digital skills landscape for adults across the UK.

MISSION FIVE

Develop our understanding of digital poverty and enhance knowledge and information sharing through the creation of research sharing networks.

Building the evidence base around digital poverty is critical to ensure that we can accurately quantify the scale of the problem and the types of social, economic and policy interventions that will lead to long-term solutions. As the DPA Evidence Review highlighted, there is a wealth of empirical studies both within the UK but also internationally that study digital poverty and the related concept of the digital divide and digital exclusion.

Yet despite a wealth of evidence, there are still some notable gaps that merit further investigation. By building a more comprehensive evidence base, policymakers can better understand the factors contributing to digital poverty and develop targeted interventions to address this pressing issue.

Key aspects of this mission include:

- **Establishing a universal definition of digital poverty** to ensure consistency in how the term is used and measured. A more focused definition would enable more robust measurement to accurately capture the extent of the problem.
- Developing **practical insights** about how individuals utilise technology through **proof-of-concept projects** and **building up** the existing repository of evidence and insights through the **research and support directory**.
- Advocating for the establishment of a **longitudinal study** that tracks changes in **digital poverty or digital inclusion/exclusion over time**.
- Undertake research to **document the lived experiences of people living in digital poverty** to develop more fine-grained understandings of its **practical consequences** and how it **intersects** with other types of inequality and disadvantage.
- Advocate for the establishment of a "**what works**" network focused on digital inclusion to help coordinate and disseminate research and insight. This network would aim to provide a central hub for research, policy, and practice, where stakeholders can exchange ideas, and collaborate on new initiatives.

Actions for 2023/24 (Phase 1)

- 5.1 Advocate for the adoption of the minimum digital living standard across government and other organisations.
- 5.2 Continue with proof-of-concept work to evaluate the benefits of technology among specific groups.
- 5.3 Build the evidence on the lived experience of digital poverty.

Actions needed by 2030 (Phase 2-4)

- 5.4 Create and develop mechanisms for research and information sharing in relation to digital poverty.
- 5.5 Advocate for a question on digital poverty in the 2031 census.
- 5.6 Advocate for a longitudinal study to measure changes in the rate and experience of digital poverty over time.
- 5.7 Consult on and build cross-sector support for a definition of digital poverty.
- 5.8 Build the evidence base on the intersectional nature of digital poverty and the understanding of how existing structures of inequality compounds its experience.
- 5.9 Conduct a social return on investment analysis for investment in digital inclusion.

MISSION SIX

Increase local capacity to provide joined-up digital inclusion support to individuals and communities.

Ultimately, ending digital poverty is contingent on the efforts of individuals and organisations at a local level. Approaches will need to be developed in the community and delivered by trusted individuals. Although there are numerous examples across the UK of community-based organisations providing digital inclusion support, this support is not always well coordinated and joined-up. Achieving a sense of cohesion, that community organisations, skills providers, local authorities, health and care services, local government services, and employers are all aligned, is no easy task. A place-based approach to digital inclusion will not adhere to a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, it is important to capture knowledge and insight from successful local areas and identify opportunities for scaling. Strong leadership within local government is crucial, along with the ability to align an ecosystem of delivery partners around a common vision.

Key aspects of this mission include:

- To ensure that **local government** plays a critical role in driving forward the digital inclusion agenda. We will advocate for **each local authority across the UK** to have a **designated digital inclusion lead** to help join up activity at a local level, engage key stakeholders around a common vision and work to overcome the practical and technical inhibitors around digital inclusion.
- To work with colleagues across **local and regional government** to **explore** mechanisms to improve the **capturing, processing, and standardisation** of data on digital poverty.
- To ensure that **NHS services** are responding to the need to support digital inclusion. It is important that the Health service frameworks across the UK, any future NHS Long Term Plan and the annual Digital Maturity Assessment process that all Health CIOs have to return each year all place greater emphasis on digital inclusion.
- Ensure that examples of joined up support provided at a local level can be shared and disseminated through existing and new networks.
- Ensure that **housing associations** and **community organisations** are supported to provide **digital inclusion support** within local communities as well as ensuring effective **signposting** through **local government and DWP services**.

Actions for 2023/24 (Phase 1)

- 6.1 Raise awareness across local authorities on the role that digital inclusion can play as a strategic enabler of local priorities.
- 6.2 Ensure housing associations are supported to drive forward digital inclusion support for their residents.
- 6.3 To pilot approaches to enable local areas to capture data on the supply and demand for digital inclusion support.
- 6.4 Work to promote best practice such as the Digital Exclusion Risk Index and the Digital Inclusion Toolkit.

Actions needed by 2030 (Phase 2-4)

- 6.5 Support local and national NHS and health and social care services to embed digital inclusion.
- 6.6 Advocate for mechanisms to build local capacity to embed digital inclusion within local areas.
- 6.7 Develop detailed personas to better understand how barriers can be tackled.
- 6.8 Create consistent and transferable ways for local authorities to gather and organise information about digital poverty and the resources available to help, with a focus on improving collaboration and information-sharing among services that serve those with complex needs.
- 6.9 Improve signposting within local government and DWP services for digital support.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT THE NATIONAL DELIVERY PLAN?

Digital poverty is a complex and pervasive issue that cannot be solved by any one sector alone. To tackle this problem, it is essential that cross-sector collaboration takes place. This means that all stakeholders, including government, industry, and civil society, must come together to work towards ending digital poverty.

The National Delivery Plan marks an important initial step towards achieving the goal of ending digital poverty by 2030, but we need your help to take this plan forward.

By taking action to address this issue, we can work towards a more equitable and connected future for all.

If you have any thoughts or reflections from the National Delivery Plan, we'd like to hear from you. Please feel free to contact us at hello@digitalpovertyalliance.org

OUR FOUNDING PARTNERS

The Digital Poverty Alliance is a charitable initiative, which was founded in 2021. Its founding partners are Currys, the Institute of Engineering and Technology and the Learning Foundation.

**LEARNING
FOUNDATION**



IET The Institution of
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PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT

Visit digitalpovertyalliance.org/pledge-portal to pledge your support for one, or more, of the six missions.

SHARE THIS PLAN

Share the plan on social media using the communication toolkit available on the website. By amplifying the key message and encouraging others to get involved, you can help to build a movement around ending digital poverty.

READ THE PLAN

