

Innovation Target Outcome (Digital Literacy Program)



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE

Target participants:

Total 110 newly arrived refugees, aged 35+ (open gender)

Program aims:

Building and developing digital literacy capacity of newly arrived refugees

Organisations involved:

Settlement Services International, SETS, libraries, and community centres

Location: Sydney, Coffs Harbour, and Newcastle.

Funding: Funded by the Department of Home Affairs.



SSI Digital literacy - In Class

INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing need to be digitally literate among the Humanitarian Settlement Program clients. The average person may have basic digital literacy, but with the ever-growing use of digital devices, platforms, and services the need for additional knowledge of how to navigate and adapt to changes is particularly impacting clients aged 35 and over.

During the pandemic it became increasingly evident that access to digital platforms was critical, and that there was no comprehensive program around digital literacy for clients.

This work aimed to address this need through four phases:

Phase one- Nov 2021- March 2022- Planning and content design

A survey and a listening campaign in the form of codesign workshops were delivered involving current and recently exited HSP clients. The codesign workshops engaged 6-8 clients in each location and was run by a facilitator face-to-face and online. The campaign helped with determining the topics delivered in the program. The main topics identified included: emailing, looking for a property, finding a job, using Facebook, online security, education and training, using your phone, how to move around, using Apps and other services, staying safe using digital technology.

Phase two- March 2022- June 2022- Implementing

The 10-week accessible program ran for eight different groups from diverse backgrounds in five locations. Locations included Berala, Guilford, Liverpool City Library, NSS Newcastle office and SSI's Coffs Harbour office. Factors related to accessibility were considered including the location, time of the sessions, childminding options, and accessibility by public transport. Where possible, we engaged trainers who spoke the language of participants and in some cases, we provided interpreter support. In addition to the trainer, we engaged two support workers to assist people based on individual needs, as 70% of the participants had been settled in Australia for less than a year.

Phase Three - June 2022

A program completion survey was conducted to evaluate the outcome of the course, then 20 champions were selected. Three factors were considered in the champions selection process, including their interest in supporting the community, choosing people with diverse languages and those with skills needed to support the community.

Phase four- July 2022-December 2022

We promoted the champions in the community and supported them when needed to continue the work beyond the program.



SSI Digital literacy - graduation

Content design: topics of learning were identified by the baseline survey and listening campaign, which increased the significance for the participants and provided a more flexible approach to customising the content and delivery process to meet participants' need. This approach also informed the project design and modules taught, thus ensuring they were tailored to the unique needs of each region.

Digital champions: This model ensured integrated support for HSP clients in the community and further social cohesion and informal learning opportunities. Clients that excelled in the program and aspired to upskill community members, educate, and mentor their families and friends were identified as champions.

Providing participants with device: All participants received a Chromebook (laptop) at the first session. They worked with their device throughout the course and took the Chromebook home upon graduation.



I was illiterate, so more practical sessions helped me feel more confident to use online platforms. Also, this course helped me to get out of home, meet new people, use public transport and practice more English...

CHALLENGES

- Covid-19 delays (we were supposed to start the project July last year)
- Unplanned new clients' arrival (caused delay in delivery)
- Flooding in March (impacted participation)
- Different levels of digital knowledge (initially identified as a challenge, but this actually meant those with increased knowledge were able to use their skills to help those with limited knowledge)



I am incredibly happy with the course. What I loved about this course is I learnt how to take the train to travel to the sessions, met new people, overcame social isolation, learnt new topics, and become familiar with online platforms...



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OUTCOMES

Based on the baseline survey, many of the participants were initially not familiar with digital literacy terminologies, how to access online service, how to identify scams and how to search for jobs online. Upon the completion of the program, we conducted a survey which showed that:

- 95% of participants indicated they can now engage online,
- 75% of participants indicated they could search for jobs online
- 90% of participants indicated they can identify scams and risk now.
- 60% of participants indicated increased confidence in speaking English (the remaining 40% indicated they already had good English foundation)
- 91% of participants indicated that the project helped them to be more familiar with English words related to digital terms

The program significantly improved the independence of participants when using digital platforms in their everyday life. It reduced social isolation and improved social cohesion. Many of the participants stated they were looking forward to coming to the session every week and had built new relationships and networks during the 10 weeks.

KEY LEARNINGS

The outcomes of this project support SSI's perspective that developing the digital literacy of refugees is a priority settlement issue.

Proficient digital literacy will deliver the following outcomes for refugees:

1. Improved access to education and training especially as it applies to the growing tendency to online learning and digital education delivery.
2. Improved workforce participation given the enhanced requirement for digital skills applying across employment categories and jobs generally.
3. Significantly improved access to information, services and products both in the first language as well as English language.
4. Enhanced capacity to engage with own language community in their local settings through social media access and through access to local ethnic media and home country information and news.

Additionally, the following factors were critical to the program's success:

1. Involvement of participants in determining and designing the topics and the program schedule.
2. Ensuring the program was inclusive and flexible (in terms of location and time of each session) to accommodate travel requirements, work and/or family commitments.

For more information visit:

<https://www.liverpoolchampion.com.au/story/7767865/digital-literacy-course-is-very-useful-for-refugess/>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/language/dari/audio/how-you-can-take-advantage-of-ssi-s-digital-literacy-course-for-mature-aged-refugees>

<https://southsydneyherald.com.au/digital-literacy-program-empowers-mature-aged-refugees/>