YPRL Digital Inclusion Strategy 2020 - 2022

Introduction

The nature of information services has changed significantly over the last few years. Rather than assisting community members with in-depth research queries, library staff are more likely to be called on to help patrons to access the information and services they need for their daily lives.

Governments globally have moved or are moving to an eGovernment (eGov) model. eGov refers to a service delivery model where the primary mode of citizens interaction with the government is online. The Australian Government has announced that all government services will be available online by 2025[1]. By 2020, 80% of Australian Government service interactions are expected to occur through a digital channel.[2]

There are many services, such as passport applications, which are already exclusively available online. The increasing use of the internet to offer government services creates an environment where not all people have the skills or ability to access those services, or access to the internet needed to do so. Such people are turning to – or being referred to – public libraries as a site of assistance.

Yarra Plenty Regional Library is committed to assisting the community in accessing the information they need and providing the tools and mechanisms to allow this to happen. Yarra Plenty Regional Library must have robust strategies and procedures in place to respond to the complex digital environment and to access the skills needed to navigate their digital requirements.

Links to Strategic Direction

YPRL Library Plan 2017 -2021's Vision is informed creative communities: connected and empowered.

YPRL's mission is to be a sector leading library service. We will provide opportunities for our diverse communities to read, learn, create and connect. We aim to be the "third space" after home and work or education, and to be regarded as the community lounge room.

YPRL's Digital Inclusion Strategy will be supported by all departments. YPRL's Digital Inclusion Strategy links to the Library Plan by addressing the following goals:

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[1] https://digitalgov.com.au/new-digital-transformation-strategy-for-government/

[2] National Information and Communications Technology Australia *New models for Digital Government: the role of service brokers in driving innovation* November 2014
https://www.nicta.com.au/content/uploads/2015/02/2014-NewmodelsforDigitalGovernment.pdf

Knowledge and Information: *Provide free access to dynamic collections with inform and delight*

Supporting strategies:

- Ensuring collections meet the needs and demands of our diverse communities
- Providing collections and resources which encourage and promote life-long learning and a love of reading for all ages

Public Participation: *Inspire our diverse communities to participate in empowering activities and learning opportunities.*

Supporting strategies:

- Delivering learning programs that respond to evolving community needs;
- Promoting branch libraries as the community hub for learning, creating and connecting

Advocacy: *advocate for greater awareness of and investment in the powerful and transforming story of our public libraries*

Supporting strategies:

- Informing and responding to Government policy
- Promoting our library service as a partner of choice, contributing to the region's social, cultural and economic growth

Infrastructure and Innovation: *Create innovative digital and physical infrastructure to deliver sector leading services*

Supporting strategies:

- Providing robust and flexible network infrastructure, sustaining our service delivery
- Responding and evolving as the technology needs of our community change

Links to Member Council strategies

YPRL's Digital Inclusion Strategy 2020 – 2022 responds to YPRL's member Council's current strategies for internal and external customer service delivery, which include:

- Every transaction will be able to be undertaken online from anywhere, at any time on any device.
- Every transaction will have been genuinely improved to make it easy for the customer.
- All transactions are secure, reliable and low cost.
- Every investment in technology is executed well to maximise and deliver valuable benefits.
- Investment in IT will contribute actively to productivity gains/cost saving or increasing customer service across the organisation.
- The focus of IT services is to support customers to achieve their goals more efficiently.

History/Context

In 2016 YPRL used an eGov Ready Library Toolkit to assess staff readiness and assist staff in dealing with the emerging issues related to eGov.

A staff survey found that:

- YPRL staff were spending more time with patrons assisting them to find, use and respond to eGov information than they were three years ago.
- YPRL staff identified that there were more members of the public being referred to the library by external services for eGov assistance than three years previously.
- A majority of staff (86%) believed that patrons find the discoverability and accessibility of government information, forms data and records challenging.
- A majority of staff felt they needed more training (84%) and more time (86%) to deal with patrons' queries.
- A majority of staff (75%) felt that library spaces are adequately designed to accommodate interaction with eGovernment, including considerations of security of personal data and privacy.
- YPRL staff report experiencing increased demand for:
  - Printing forms from the web – 95%,
  - Filling in online forms   - 88%
  - Assistance in scanning and/or uploading personal information to eGov sites   - 84%
  - Submitting online forms   - 82%
  - Assistance in sending and setting up email accounts related to obtaining forms   - 79%   & 72%
  - Certification or witnessing of documents   -   61%
- Areas of service where staff have seen increased demand for assistance included Department of Justice, Passport application, Citizen applications, Centrelink, VicRoads, Tax and Medicare.

In 2016 YPRL developed an eGov Strategy 2016 – 2017 to respond to the introduction of myGov and other eGov services in Australia.

Deliverable outcomes included:

Goal	Responsibility	Outcomes
Add eGov and other appropriate links to the website	Web Services Coordinator	Achieved.
Develop prescriptive procedures/FAQs for staff	Branch Managers/Manager Collections	Not undertaken.
Partner with Department of Humans Services/Department	Human Resources Coordinator	Not undertaken.

of Justice for training opportunities		
Investigate opportunities for providing Justices of Peace at library branches at specific times and days	Manager – Collections/Branch Managers	Not undertaken.
Commit to continuing Digital Literacy classes at all branches	Branch Managers/Learning Coordinators	Achieved.

Review

A review of Yarra Plenty Regional Library's (YPRL) eGov Strategy 2016 was undertaken in 2019. The review consisted of consultation with Senior Leadership Team and some Coordinators; an environmental scan; and an assessment of current in-branch eGov and digital literacy offers; a facilitated digital literacy planning session attended by Branch Managers and Coordinators.

Strengths
- YPRL staff are frequently receiving eGov assistance requests in branch and a majority have the skills and confidence to help.

- Yarra Plenty conducts many training sessions and classes to assist community members in improving their digital literacy skills. Community members can participate in basic, intermediate and advanced sessions in learning how to use computers, internet, social media sites and applications, iPads, Androids, web/blog design etc.

- Free and accessible wi-fi, and public computers are offered by Yarra Plenty Regional Library; policies and procedures ensure security and privacy of such services. Free and low-cost printing and scanning services are offered by Yarra Plenty Regional Library.

Challenges
- One-on-one assistance for eGov sites and online forms can be time-consuming, particularly if a patron has low literacy or low digital literacy.

- Some staff lack the ability or confidence to offer digital literacy and eGov assistance to patrons.

- There are associated privacy issues when staff assist the public with their online forms. YPRL staff are assisting the public with the forms and interfaces, however, sometimes there is a fine line between assisting with the interface and patrons needing help with the content of the forms.

Opportunities

- As eGov continues to grow in scope, so do patron enquiries and requests for assistance. There remains a high demand from library staff for assistance in filling in online forms; printing forms from the web; submitting online forms; and assistance in scanning and/or uploading personal information to eGov sites. A coordinated approach to supporting eGov assistance in branch will grow the library's ability to better serve its communities.

- The *Value of Public Libraries in Victoria* report (SGS Economics and Planning, 2018) shows that Victoria's public libraries receive five visits per capita per year. A previous economic report (*Dollars, Sense and Public Libraries*, 2011) noted that library membership in Victoria is estimated to be 48% - over 3 million people. The library is therefore known, highly used and an integral part of civic life in Victoria, meaning it could be a key partner for regional services to offer a collaborative approach to assisting with local eGov issues.

- Grants and funding initiatives are available to assist organisations who are undertaking to offer eGov support in the community.

Threats

- A significant number of constituents in YPRL's local Council areas speak languages other than English at home (Banyule 22%; Whittlesea 44.1%; Nillumbik 9) and/or have low proficiency in English (Banyule 2.7%; Nillumbik 1%; Whittlesea 17%). Strategies are needed to ensure these potentially vulnerable communities can be assisted by the library.

- The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2019 (Roy Morgan Research, 2019) demonstrates that, while overall digital inclusion is growing in Australia, the gaps between digitally included and excluded Australians are substantial and widening. As its Local Government Areas of Banyule, Nillumbik and Whittlesea include a number of digitally-excluded cohorts including seniors aged 65+; women, particularly older women; people with a disability; Aboriginal people and households on low incomes, YPRL should ensure that that strategies are introduced to ensure these groups are not left out.

Digital Inclusion Strategy

YPRL's Digital Inclusion Strategy will ensure that local residents of Banyule, Nillumbik and Whittlesea can access the training, support and connectivity they need to thrive in the increasingly-digital world.

The Strategy ensures a coordinated and well-planned approach to the delivery of services and programs that offer digital literacy and eGov support.

What is digital inclusion – understanding the terms

Digital inclusion is about access to information and communications technology and the resulting social and economic benefits.[3]

To build a digitally inclusive community, everyone needs to have access to broadband and devices; have the skills and confidence to use the internet; and be able to use technology to access essential services.

It's important to note that digital inclusion is not just about access, but places particular emphasis on empowerment and participation, both social and economic. While technical skills and abilities are essential, they alone are not sufficient to be fully engaged with digital environments. Individuals should be able "to create meaning and feelings in it" thereby embracing the cultural and creative manifestation of digital inclusion instead of focusing just on technical skills per se.[4]

Digital literacy means having the skills you need to live, learn, and work in a society where communication and access to information is increasingly through digital technologies like internet platforms, social media, and mobile devices.

What is eGov – understanding online services

eGov refers to online services offered by the government.

According to myGov, the Australian Government's online services portal, myGov is "a simple and secure way to access government online services". Services include:

- Australian JobSearch
- Australian Taxation Office
- Centrelink
- Child Support
- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- HousingVic Online Services
- Medicare
- My Aged Care
- My Health Record
- National Disability Insurance Scheme
- Passport
- State Revenue Office Victoria
- Working with children check
- Working with Children Check

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[3] Australia Digital Inclusion Index, 2020 - https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/about/about-digital-inclusion/
[4] Digital mentoring in Australian communities, 2019 - https://auspost.com.au/content/dam/auspost_corp/media/documents/digital-mentoring-in-australian-communities.pdf

Additionally, Local Government services are increasingly available online, including:

- Animal registration
- Community grants
- Consultations

- News and information
- Planning permits
- Parking permits and fines

- Pay rates
- Report issues
- Venue hire and meeting room bookings

Skills needed in order to access online government services include:

- Literacy
- Digital literacy and confidence
- Ability to set up and use own email account
- Ability to fill in forms
- Access to internet and hardware such as computers, printing, scanning
- Basic understanding of privacy issues

YPRL's Digital Inclusion Goals

The following principals underpin YPRL's commitment to supporting digital inclusion within its communities:

- YPRL is a place of connection, information and training
- YPRL takes a partnership approach to service
- YPRL advocates for the benefit of its communities
- YPRL has a digitally-literate workforce

Goal: YPRL is a place of connection, information and training

YPRL conducts many training sessions and classes to assist community members in improving their digital literacy skills. Community members can participate in basic, intermediate and advanced sessions in learning how to use computers, internet, social media sites and applications, iPads, Androids, web/blog design etc.

Libraries provide spaces and environments where community members feel comfortable in accessing information online. Providing private spaces is complex as the library also has a duty of care to be mindful of patrons accessing the internet inappropriately. However, future spaces should be designed in such a way that areas can still be monitored whilst patrons feel that their privacy is still protected.

YPRL provides free public PCs and free internet access at all service points. Copy, print and scan services are provided on a cost-recovery basis.

Actions:

- Conduct an audit of the time branch staff spend providing technical assistance to patrons in the course of their desk duties.
- Develop basic guidelines (flowchart) to assist staff in helping with digital literacy and eGov enquiries. Staff should offer assistance in branch or refer patron to a class in branch – not refer patrons to other branches.
- Explore more flexible staffing arrangements to allow on-the-spot learning encounters for patrons.
- Ensure library Collections and resources are contemporary and relevant to community need.

Goal: YPRL takes a partnership approach to service

YPRL supports and delivers on the strategies of its three member Councils.

The establishment of partnerships with government, community, non-profit, professional and organisations or individuals will enhance YPRL's ability to deliver appropriate digital inclusion services and programs to its communities.

YPRL will seek grants and opportunities to work with other organisations to co-deliver services to extend the reach and impact of its Digital Inclusion Strategy.

Actions:
- Apply for grants and EOIs for funding to increase capacity to deliver programs, such as through Be Connected, Social Seniors etc.
- Develop a volunteer-led digital literacy program to increase staffing capacity to deliver programs, the Digital Mentors Program.
- Explore and introduce innovative program models such as Securi-Tea and Paperwork Lounge where community members come together to both learn and support each other in undertaking online activities such as emailing, using social media, paying bills, and navigating eGov sites.
- Partner with Council and Government service providers and organisations to deliver information and programs.

Goal: YPRL advocates for the benefit of its communities

Many government agencies are directing community members to public libraries for assistance with their eGov needs. Building partnerships with service agencies will enable YPRL to advocate for training, support, human resources and funding to assist with delivering such assistance.

YPRL can play a leading role in lobbying to ensure that Victorian libraries are able to make improvements to services or access to programs for their communities.

YPRL can be an advisory to Council, Government and organisations in the needs and requirements of its community in the digital literacy space.

Actions:

- Be an active participant in Local, State and National advocacy campaigns for increased Digital Inclusion projects, support and funding.
- Put the user experience at the front of future ICT purchasing decisions such as software, hardware, website etc – ensure purchases are reviewed for accessibility and ease of use before purchase.
- Create opportunities for local service providers to present in libraries – through expos, events or pop-ups.
- Share key information from government partners about eGov, digital literacy, privacy and internet safety to YPRL audience through website, social media and in-branch, such as during key national campaigns Safer Internet Day and National Esmart Week.

YPRL has a digitally-literate workforce who are able to assist their community

YPRL offers training and support to ensure that all staff have a working level of digital literacy.

All YPRL branch staff should be trained in the basics of digital mentoring.

Digital literacy-related staff training will be designed to build staff's general knowledge, familiarity and confidence in the online space. Staff training will be focussed on building confident learners that can problem-solve issues.

- Conduct a survey of staff to assess levels of confidence in their digital literacy skills.
- Develop and deliver training to assist staff to increase their professional digital literacy, confidence, and familiarity of online spaces.
- Develop and circulate technical assistance guidelines for staff to refer to when providing assistance to patrons.
- Circulate Telstra Foundation Digital Mentors Handbook and offer training in digital assistance.

It is important to note that library staff are not expected to become agency representatives and therefore that level of training is not required.

Measuring success

Evaluation of YPRL's Digital Inclusion Strategy will be undertaken through a number of qualitative and quantitative measures as outlined below.

The overall success of YPRL's approach to Digital Inclusion will be measured by monitoring the Australian Digital Inclusion Index. YPRL aims to maintain or increase its Digital Inclusion Index score of Melbourne's north over time.

Digital Inclusion Index – 2019 benchmark

Victoria: Digital inclusion by geography (ADII 2019)

2019	Australia	VIC	Melbourne North
ACCESS			
Internet Access	87.9	88.9	91.0
Internet Technology	80.4	81.0	83.8
Internet Data Allowance	58.7	60.9	66.0
	75.7	76.9	80.3
AFFORDABILITY			
Relative Expenditure	54.6	54.5	60.1
Value of Expenditure	63.9	66.1	72.8
	59.2	60.3	66.5
DIGITAL ABILITY			
Attitudes	51.2	52.4	54.5
Basic Skills	58.1	60.5	64.3
Activities	43.1	45.1	49.6
	50.8	52.7	56.1
DIGITAL INCLUSION INDEX	61.9	63.3	67.6

Source: Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2019

Goal	Actions	Performance Measures	Timeframe
YPRL is a place of connection, information and training	Conduct an audit of the time branch staff spend providing technical assistance to patrons in the course of desk duties. Develop basic guidelines (flowchart) to assist staff in helping with digital literacy and eGov enquiries. Staff should offer assistance in branch or refer patron to a class in branch – not refer patrons to other branches. Explore more flexible staffing arrangements to allow on-the-spot learning encounters for patrons.	Audit completed. Guidelines developed. Pilot and assess one flexible staffing arrangement to allow on-the-spot learning encounters for patrons. % of new items loaned in the first year of purchase – keep at or above 95%	Year 1 Year 1 Year 2

	Ensure library Collections and resources are contemporary and relevant to community need.		
YPRL takes a partnership approach to service	Apply for grants and EOIs for funding to increase capacity to deliver programs, such as through Be Connected, Social Seniors etc.	Maintain or increase funding for digital literacy programs – 2019 benchmark $4,000	Year 1 & 2
	Develop a volunteer-led digital literacy program to increase staffing capacity to deliver programs.	Increasing number of volunteer hours delivered – 2019 benchmark 850 hours a month	Year 1
	Explore and introduce innovative program models such as Securi-Tea and Paperwork Lounge where community members come together to both learn and support each other in undertaking online activities such as emailing, using social media, paying bills, and navigating eGov sites.	Events and activities for adults are valued (benchmark: user survey rating average 94.4%)	Year 1 & 2
	Partner with Council and Government service providers and organisations to deliver information and programs.	Three new partnerships established.	Year 1 & 2
YPRL designs services and advocates for the benefit of its communities	Undertake lobbying to appropriate bodies to make improvements to services, or increased education campaigns	Improved digital access and support for local residents	Year 1 & 2
	Put the user experience at the front of future ICT purchasing decisions such as software, hardware, website etc – ensure purchases are reviewed for accessibility and ease of use before purchase.	Improved accessibility and ease of use of YPRL systems and software.	Year 1 & 2
	Create opportunities for service providers to present	Maintain or grow attendance at all programs (benchmark: 207,759)	Year 2

	in libraries – through expos, events or pop-ups. Share key information from government partners about eGov, digital literacy, privacy and internet safety to YPRL audience through website, social media and in-branch, such as during key national campaigns Safer Internet Day and National Esmart Week.	Increased visitation to website and social media channels	Year 1 & 2
YPRL has a digitally-literate workforce	Conduct a survey of staff to assess levels of confidence in their digital literacy skills.	Staff confidence increases over time (benchmark to be determined in survey).	Year 1
	Develop and deliver training to assist staff to increase their professional digital literacy, confidence, and familiarity of online spaces.	Maintain or increase staff number of staff training hours.	Year 2
	Develop and circulate technical assistance guidelines for staff to refer to when providing assistance to patrons.	Training implemented.	Year 1
	Circulate Telstra Foundation Digital Mentors Handbook and offer training in digital assistance.	Digital Mentors guidelines implemented.	Year 1 & 2