

What is Community Technology?

Community Technology is the purposeful use of computers, Internet, and digital communication systems by non-profit and community-based organizations to enhance the delivery of mission in a way that helps clients develop technology literacy skills through beneficial, hands-on interaction with technology. The term "Community Technology" is frequently abbreviated as "CT."

The CT Field describes a wide variety of CT Programs within non-profit and community-based organizations providing:

- Education and skill building opportunities;
- Access to hardware and software
- Internet connectivity, and
- Access to vital services via technology.

Impact of Community Technology Programs

Around Washington State, there are hundreds of CT Programs that:

- Level the playing field of opportunity by focusing services on historically under-supported and technology underserved communities and are often geared toward low-income and low-literacy residents, seniors, people with disabilities, at-risk youth, immigrants and refugees, and people of color.
- Are hosted/sponsored by a wide range of trusted non-profit or public community organizations, such as youth and community centers, small business and workforce training centers, mutual assistance associations and settlement houses, low-income housing, libraries or schools opened for community programs.
- Increase residents' self-sufficiency and capacity to learn, develop their skills and talents, and help people more fully participate in community and civic affairs. The result is a more educated community, more able workforce, new entrepreneurs, safer kids and a better connected community. CT programs also help develop consumers of information technology products and services.



Photos: City of Seattle Community Technology Program

Examples of Powerful CT Programs

Horn of Africa Services provides culturally appropriate services that enhance the employability of East African refugees and immigrants residing in the Seattle area.

Jack Straw Foundation provides blind youth from Washington State with a team-based creative and educational experience in audio production using adaptive technology to increase their self-determination and self-expression.

Reel Grlls provides innovative video and computer-based media training to teenage girls in the Puget Sound region enabling them to produce films about issues that are important to them and screen/broadcast their work in the community.

Recreation Technology Coalition provides computer-based academic support and technology training to lower-income public school students in the city of Seattle.

The Inland Northwest Community Access Network (TINCAN) provides training to at-risk Spokane County teens in video production and online and broadcast news with the purpose of increasing civic engagement and improving academic performance.

Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) provides a Technology Safety and Access Project designed to strengthen financial literacy and access to technology among survivors of domestic violence in Washington.

Puget Sound Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology (PSCTLT) provides the TechREACH program aimed at increasing the number of underrepresented middle school girls who pursue science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) classes, degrees, and careers.

What is the Communities Connect Network?

Communities Connect is a Statewide Network focused on supporting and advancing community development in Washington State through the use of community technology. Hundreds of community organizations across Washington State utilize technology to help their clients meet their goals, which range from increasing grades and graduation rates for youth, to higher wages and new careers for adults.

The primary focus of the Communities Connect Network is to support and deliver value to community technology providers statewide, and increase support for community technology through increasing awareness about community technology.

CCN Initiatives 2007-2008

There are many valuable and effective applications of Community Technology (CT). Between now and June 2008, the Communities Connect Network (CCN) will focus on two important types of CT programs:

- Financial Literacy among youth and adults (Asset Building)
- After-school educational programs for youth (Educational Enhancement)

CCN is currently engaged in a series of activities to advance and support CT programs statewide that offer either Asset Building and/or Educational Enhancement activities to underserved, hard-to-reach populations in Washington. A team of leadership organizations from Washington's private and public sectors are actively working on a series of initiatives, all of which are currently funded by a variety of private grants. CCN's initiatives include ...

- ... Researching the scope, impact and value of Community Technology on economic and community development;
- ... Developing a portfolio of case studies that demonstrate powerful examples of Community Technology;
- ... Creating a community of professional practitioners in Washington that understand the potential of, and demonstrate excellence in Community Technology activities;
- ... Formation of a statewide "Corporate Council for Community Technology;"
- ... Training a team of community-based practitioners in outreach and advocacy skills;
- ... Seeking-out and partnering statewide with other organizations and initiatives with similar goals; and
- ... Coordinating consortium-styled grant proposals aimed at demonstrating the impact of CT in the areas of Asset Building and Educational Enhancement.

In the effort to achieve these initiatives (above), CCN is following a four-part work plan that includes the following set of activities:

1. **Discovery:** The mapping of relevant opportunities for CCN to strategically advance the awareness of CT among the CT Field and Change Makers (decision makers and leaders).
2. **Relationship Building:** The creation of person-to-person connections between highly-effective CT practitioners, allies of the CT Field, and Change Makers.
3. **Outreach:** The implementation of strategic activities that measurably increase Change Makers' awareness of the impact of the CT Field, and the opportunities to strengthen and support the CT Field to make positive differences in the lives of Washington's citizens.
4. **Evaluation:** The in-depth assessment of CCN's success and nonsuccess in achieving CCN's goals, which will inform CCN's sustainability and continuation plan to begin June 2008.

	07												08				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Discovery																	
Relationship Building																	
Outreach																	
Evaluation																	

By June 2008, funding for CCN's leadership activities will terminate. Therefore, a top priority for CCN is to develop a long-term sustainability plan for the network to continue advancing and supporting Community Technology in Washington State.

Alignment with Statewide Priorities

CCN is focused on Financial Literacy and After-School Programs; these applications of CT align with several state-level initiatives, policies and passed legislation. CCN is actively exploring opportunities with state agencies, private non-profit organizations, and corporate leaders to advance these type of CT activities in alignment with statewide priorities. By applying innovative CT solutions to these priorities, CCN can help the state achieve several important goals, such as: 1) improving opportunities and incentives for lower income citizens to acquire and preserve assets; and 2) encourage creativity and innovation to enhance education in Washington State to help young people become competitive in a global market.



Photos: City of Seattle Community Technology Program

Financial Literacy

CTED's Asset Development Program:

Includes financial literacy training, savings and individual development accounts, home and small business ownership, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and tax preparation, and programs to assist in credit repair and avoiding high-cost loans.

HB 3157 (passed by House in '06): Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to encourage recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families to learn about asset building and participate in programs to assist low-income persons in developing personal assets.

HB 2394 (signed into law in '06): Requires the development of WorkFirst individual responsibility plans to include consideration of the potential benefit of financial literacy training for the WorkFirst recipient. Permits up to 10 hours of financial literacy training to be included in an individual responsibility plan.

After-School Programs

Washington Learns: "... With public-private partnerships, we can find creative ways to fund scholarships, increase the use of technology, provide mentors and reduce costs. Private organizations bring credibility, nimbleness and flexible funding, and they directly benefit from an educated workforce. The public sector offers experience and expertise along with public resources and public accountability. Each partner is essential in creating a lasting, sustainable, world-class lifelong learning experience." (Principle #4, page 8).

How You Can Help

- Point us to other potential funding opportunities
- Tell us about how CT programs might match your programmatic needs
- Give us feedback!! manager@communitiesconnect.org

The Communities Connect Network is led by a team of private and public organizations working together to expand awareness of the the CT Field in Washington State.



<http://www.communitiesconnect.org/>