Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

# FINAL REPORT



**Prepared For :**

Inner Metropolitan
Partnership fund

# Multicultural Digital
# Inclusion Project
June 2021 - May 2022

# Contents

# Executive summary

It is with great pleasure that I present our final report for the Multicultural Digital Inclusion Program that has been run through funding provided by the Inner Metropolitan Partnership Fund.

Through this project we were tasked with the challenge of designing and delivering digital training programs for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and other vulnerable community members living in the Inner Metropolitan region of Melbourne. As the delivery partner, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHVic) engaged 6 Neighbourhood Community Houses and Centres (NCHCs) to offer place based programs to meet the needs of these members within their local communities.

Our Multicultural Digital Inclusion program improved access and delivered individualised digital literacy training working towards digital inclusion for people from CALD communities and other vulnerable community members.

Our sites were chosen for their geographical spread as well as their existing relationships with their local CALD community members. Each NCHC worked with their communities to identify and address barriers that existed.

This report will outline the work undertaken at each of these NCHCs. Kensington Neighbourhood House addressed the growing digital divide that had disproportionately impacted their local students and their families through a lack of access to digital devices and reliable internet. Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House and Collingwood Neighbourhood House under the same management, delivered a digital mentoring program with local residents to enable better access and skills enabling them to bridge the barriers to digital inclusion.

Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre also developed a digital mentoring program that addressed the barriers of lack of devices, internet access and language to ensure their community members had greater access and connectivity to digital inclusion which has been imbedded in their Community Development programs. Finally, North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre employed multilingual digital mentors to address the language barriers that excluded their community from accessing the digital support that they needed.

Our sixth site, Elwood and St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre had to withdraw from the project due to a lack of resources within the centre through the impact of the global pandemic. Upon their withdrawal, their funding was distributed across the remaining 5 sites to further their programs.

It is important to note that each of these programs was affected by the global pandemic and the extended lockdowns experienced in Melbourne throughout the delivery period. Each of the NCHCs was able to pivot their programs and continue to meet their objectives, although the delivery format was not as they had originally intended.

What lies in this report is a culmination of the hard work put in across the 5 sites to provide place based solutions to improve digital inclusion for CALD and vulnerable community members. It has been a pleasure managing this project and I hope you enjoy reading about the incredible impact that our Multicultural Digital Inclusion Program has had through the generosity of the Inner Metropolitan Partnership Fund.

# Emily Harnett

Special Programs Manager
Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

## Project Context

This report has been prepared by NHVic for the Inner Metropolitan Partnership. The project was funded and guided by the Victorian Government's Metropolitan Partnerships Development Fund, which supports the Metropolitan Partnerships to act on local priorities, informs their advice to government and supports Melbourne's social and economic recovery.

The Inner Metropolitan Partnership encompasses the local government areas of City of Port Phillip, City of Yarra and City of Melbourne. The Partnership identified social cohesion as a key priority for their region. This project attempts to address this priority by better understanding the digital inclusion barriers that CALD communities face and evaluating approaches that can bridge the digital divide.



## Participating Neighbourhood and Community Houses and Centres

Kensington Neighbourhood House - KNH



Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House (Richmond) - BANH



Collingwood Neighbourhood House - CNH



Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre - CNLC



North Melbourne Language and Learning - NMLL

## Introduction

The Multicultural Digital Inclusion program was designed to improve digital inclusion for people from CALD communities and other vulnerable community members living in Inner Metropolitan Melbourne. We delivered individualised digital literacy access, mentoring, community peer leader programs and training across multiple sites in the Inner Metropolitan region to meet identified needs.

Our approach built on the strength of the established relationships Neighbourhood Houses had with community members and their ability to build local based solutions. Utilising a community development approach that underpins our sector and providing funding across multiple sites we developed digital inclusion programs that catered to the specific needs of their local CALD communities. Through this program, Neighbourhood Houses addressed barriers and bridged the digital divide working towards digital inclusion for all.

## Objectives

The key objectives of the project were to:

• Improve digital skills for targeted culturally and linguistically diverse communities

• Improve understanding of the barriers CALD communities face to experiencing digital inclusion

• Document and evaluate different approaches to bridging the digital divide for CALD community members across multiple locations.

## Summary of Outcomes across the 5 delivery sites

### Courses established

• 10 week computer skills course delivered to adults - KNH
• Offered a Digital Kids Holiday program - KNH
• Established a digital mentor program in Richmond and Collingwood with 17 participants - BANH and CNH
• Recruited and trained 6 digital mentors for their program - CNLC
• 5 of the mentees have go on to enrol in other computer classes being offered - CNLC
• Recruited 5 digital mentors with 3 becoming employed to provide digital literacy support to community members covering English, Mandarin and Vietnamese languages - NMLL
• Provided a 'Tech Connect' drop in IT hub twice a week with the added support of their multilingual digital mentors - NMLL

### Devices purchased -

• 17 laptops distributed to local CALD families to keep - KNH
• 19 Laptops purchased and distributed to Digital mentors and participants of the Digital mentoring program - BANH & CNH
• Projector and projector screen - BANH & CNH
• 1 laptop purchased, a further 2 laptops were purchased by CNLC and 6 were donated by the University of Melbourne totalling 9 laptops - CNLC
• 4 laptops for the digital mentors - NMLL

## Plans beyond the grant period -

KNH -
Future sessions will be offered with a focus on Cyber Security.
Children will continue to receive digital support where needed through their established Study Support program.
Future computer courses available to parents/carers through KNH.

BANH & CNH -
One on one assistance will continue to be offered at the Richmond centre
The digital mentor program will continue to delivered at the Collingwood site with some digital mentors from the Richmond site being employed to deliver the program at the other site

CNLC -
There is a wait list for both mentors and mentees who have contacted CNLC after hearing about the program.
The digital mentor program will continue to run, using the resources developed in this project.

NMLL-
Digital mentors will continue to be employed as long as they are able to continue to find funding for them.
NMLL will seek funding to engage bi-lingual staff whenever possible moving forward


## Learnings and recommendations -

KNH
Consulting with CALD communities to understand their needs is vital.
Supplying permanent devices rather than loaning them is more beneficial and has a bigger impact
Leveraging off existing community contact points such as Study Support programs is powerful and has a bigger impact.

BANH & CNH
Leveraging partnerships with the local library engages more participants and enables community members to understand the resources available at their local library.
Remunerating digital mentors is important to attract and retain them in the program.
Having sufficient lead time and delivery timeframes shouldn't be underestimated
There is a need for not only physical devices, but an understanding of the cost and time required to install and maintain software is a crucial component

CNLC-
Face to face and one on one training, while more time consuming and using more resources, is the most effective delivery method
Due to conflicting commitments and offers of paid work, volunteer mentors can be sometimes unreliable and unable to commit for long periods of time

NMLL-
It is crucial to offer digital support in a range of language to meet the needs of the local community
Strong relationships built on trust provide a strong foundation and are essential to work with the CALD communities.
Having devices that can be loaned to community members and providing free internet is fundamental to bridging the digital divide. As such, funding through infrastructure grants to enable houses/centres to buy computer equipment for community loan and offering free internet for the community to access.
Further recurrent funding to allow houses/centre to engage multilingual digital mentors would be incredibly beneficial.

# Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH)

## Context

The 2020/2021 Melbourne lockdowns and subsequent increased reliance on digital devices and connectivity disproportionally impacted Kensington's local culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community. With limited access to devices and low digital literacy amongst parents and carers, children and young people from CALD families have faced falling further behind their peers in an increasingly digital world. It has been Kensington Neighbourhood House's observation that barriers have not been reduced post-lockdown. With children returning loaned devices to schools and many services remaining online families continue to face challenges in both digital access and in the development of necessary skills.

KNH's Multicultural Digital Inclusion project has worked to address these issues by providing laptops to families to keep and offering computer training to both parents and children. Ongoing digital mentoring and support have also and will continue to be provided to families by KNH.



## Project Delivery

KNH undertook a number of stages in their delivery of the project

### Stage 1 - Needs assessment
A needs assessment was carried out by the KNH Education Coordinator with 17 families from the Study Support program. Questions covered internet access, number of devices owned by each family, what they used the internet for and areas they wanted to see their children improve in. While many families owned at least an iPad, many did not own a laptop. This information was used to inform the type of device and training most needed.

## Stage 2 - Equipment purchase

Quotations and purchase of laptops was undertaken. 17 Dell laptops, laptop cases and Microsoft work licences purchased through Connecting Up a not-for-profit that discounts computers and IT hardware.

## Stage 3 - Getting Started with Computers

Parents and carers invited to participate in a 10-week pre- accredited computer course called Getting Started with Computers. The course covered cybersecurity, emailing, googling, word docs, attachments and more. Four mothers joined the training.



## Stage 4 - Laptop set-up

Each laptop was set-up with Microsoft Office, Chrome and Zoom making it easy for families to use the laptops upon taking them home.

## Stage 5 - Digital Kids Holiday program

A Digital Kids Holiday program was planned for the April school holidays where 45 children aged 8 – 13 years old were invited to attend a computer. 28 children attended. Each family was provided with a laptop to take home at the end of the program.

## Stage 6 - Project Evaluation

Informal qualitative evaluation was conducted with families once they have received their laptop and participated in the computer program.

## Project Outcomes and Achievements

KNH's Multicultural Digital Inclusion project has achieved the following direct outcomes:

• 17 laptops distributed to CALD families to keep
• 4 mothers attending 10-week computer course
• 28 children attending the Digital Kids Holiday program

### Devices

Key feedback shared by mothers during the needs assessment was that they wanted their family to own a computer as opposed to borrowing one. This was often related to a fear of breaking a borrowed device and then owing either the school or Neighbourhood House. This fear impacted how the families then used the device. A central achievement of this project was providing laptops for families to keep directly increased 17 families (approx. 120 people) digital access and empowerment.



### Digital Kids Holiday program

The Digital Kids Holiday program was another key achievement. Delivered during the April school holidays the program provided children and young people a chance to develop their computer skills including PPT, googling and coding. The program was run in four sessions with the groups rotating between a digital session and general arts and craft session making Ramadan lanterns. Attendance and feedback were positive from the students with many commenting on how much fun they'd had. The program also provided us the opportunity to assess the level of digital literacy and what additional support was needed going forward.
Having the Study Support Coordinator join the holiday program was also connection between the two programs.

## Consultation and relationship building

The project has instigated a process of consultation with families around their digital needs, some of which we have been directly met through this funding and some of which KNH will continue to embed into the type of programming and support we offer. This process has further strengthened our relationships with the families and positioning us better to support their digital needs going forward.



## Challenges

1. An initial plan for the program had been to engage online digital mentors who would support each family in their digital needs. However, finding enough volunteers with the skills to work with families online and manage language, technology and time barriers was impractical. Instead, it was decided that parents & carers should be invited to attend KNH's pre-accredited computer class. Given the spectrum of digital literacy in the parent cohort this approach worked well as it provided a choice to the parent as to whether they needed/wanted to attend. The four mothers that did join were therefore more invested.

2. A practical challenge was the process of setting up the laptops to be ready for use. With many families not having the necessary skills or emails to easily set-up their laptop each device was manually set-up at KNH. Several technical difficulties were encountered in this process. This was overcome through engaging South East IT to provide support.

3. With 28 children aged 8 – 13 years attending the Digital Kids Holiday Program there was a broad spectrum of computer skills within the group. Meeting all these needs during the program was challenging. By breaking the program into four different sessions and having the Study Support Coordinator helping at the program and identifying which children should go in which group we were able to match skill level as much as possible

## Evaluation Process and Results

Informal qualitative evaluation was carried out through phone calls and chats with families after they had received their laptop and joined the holiday program. Amran Guleid, the Study Support Co-Coordinator and a parent of children who received a laptop supported this process. With qualifications in Community Development and three languages at her disposal (English, Somali, Swahili), Amran was ideally placed to liaise with the families who joined the program and collect feedback.

### Parent feedback:

• Everyone was really happy to get their own laptop and particularly one that was good quality. Having it set-up with Microsoft office was also helpful.
• Having the Digital Kids Holiday program during the April school holidays was great. Parents asked if this could be repeated in the future as it was something for their kids to enjoy and develop extra skills.
• Impressed with the turnout particularly as it was during Ramadan.

### Children/young people:

• Excited to get their own laptop, although some less excited to share with their siblings!
• Loved the digital session in the holiday program.
• Rayyan aged 13 yrs. old particularly enjoyed making the PPT about her favourite things and then presenting it to the group. Practiced keyboard short cuts for copy and pasting.
• Hamza aged 9 yrs. found the coding interesting and fun.

Community Engagement and Partnership

The project targeted families already attending KNH's Study Support program reinforcing these relationships. A key step in the community engagement process was the consultation undertaken through the needs assessment. By asking families questions about their existing digital capacity and access to devices and internet we were able to tailor the program to their specific needs. This was also helped by working closely with the Study Support Coordinator and Co-Coordinator who have an existing understanding around the children's learning needs.

An initial partnership with Dell was explored as part of the digital mentor idea however due to restrictions listed above it was decided it was not feasible to deliver.
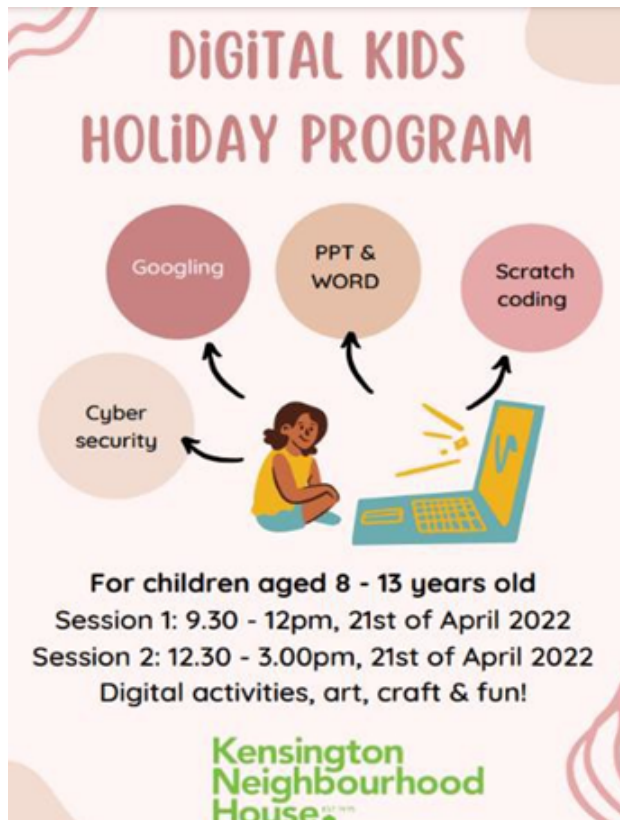
Communication and Media

• The main channel of communication was calling and face-to-face chats. This is one of the best methods of speaking to their local CALD families.

• A flyer was developed to promote the Digital Kids Holiday program.

• Photos were taken throughout the program.

## Success

A key success in this project was the decision to give the laptops to families to keep, instead of lending them out in loan agreements.

## Learning

Given the variation in skill level in the students that attended the Digital Holiday program having more volunteers to support one-on-one would have been helpful.

## Recommendation

Find what works for the community! While they had initially thought digital mentors would be a good approach it ended up working better to offer a class to parents instead, leaving it to them to decide if they wanted to join or not. Consultation around time and content is key in the development of adult computer classes.

## Next Steps

1. There are plans in place to run a cyber-security workshop with the mothers of the families who received laptops. Parents have shared that they want to develop more skills in monitoring and restricting what their children are accessing on the internet and how much time they're spending online. A workshop will be hosted at KNH during Term 2.

2. Children will continue receiving digital support where needed through the Study Support program and parents and carers can join the computer course run at KNH.

# Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House and Collingwood Neighbourhood House

## Context

Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House (BANH), Collingwood Neighbourhood House (CNH) and Yarra Libraries partnered to deliver the Train the Trainer project to improve access to online technologies and digital literacy amongst residents living in both the North Richmond and Collingwood public housing estates. As both houses have the same management, this project was delivered across the 2 sites to maximise the impact. The train the trainer model was utilised as it would meet the needs of the CALD community members and was going to be sustainable beyond the length of the project.

This project aimed at improving digital inclusion and social and mental wellbeing and increase digital citizenship for public housing residents in both Richmond and Collingwood. The initiative was project managed by BANH who utilised their strong relationship with public housing residents on both public housing estates to recruit residents. Yarra Libraries facilitated the sessions, drawing on their expertise and resources with the support of volunteers and BANH staff.

## Delivery

This project was delivered in a number of stages through the delivery of the project

### Initiation phase:

BANH developed project proposals and liaised with the working group to discuss and define the project scope. This included project goals and objectives, budgets and recruiting participants.



### Planning phase:

BANH and Yarra Libraries staff worked together to design the projects content, pre and post evaluation questionnaire, recruit participants and agree on the roles and responsibilities of the partners.

### Execution:

Participants were invited for an information session at BANH's regular drop-in session at the Factory. Participants were provided with intake forms which included questions about confidence and skills levels related to their digital literacy. Based on the collation of this information the facilitators were able to adapt the original design of the program to suit the needs of those engaged.

The program ran in Richmond for the initial 6-week period, with a different topic each week based on the participant's interests and skills. The participants continue to attend the drop-in sessions for 1:1 support with a digital mentor. The Collingwood program is currently continuing. Two of the Richmond participants have been employed to work alongside BANH and Yarra Libraries to deliver the project in Collingwood.

### Closure:

Participants were provided a pre and post evaluation to measure the success of the program. BANH and Yarra Libraries also underwent a reflection process to refine the lessons learnt. This will also be undertaken when the program is completed at Collingwood.

## Outcomes and Achievements

17 people completed the train the train project with regular attendance at the weekly sessions. Participants reported that they felt valued and enjoyed attending the sessions.

All people enrolled in the project completed the course and were able to keep their laptops and be reimbursed for their time. This had a lasting impact on the participants as they will be able to continue developing their digital literacy skills beyond the project and was an important part of having a sustainable impact on the digital inclusion for local residents.

The NBN also came and presented to the groups surrounding safety and security on the internet, including creating and choosing safe passwords. This was considered another important element of the delivery.

## Challenges

This project presented a number of challenges. Firstly, there were obvious challenges of delivering a project through Covid lockdowns and restrictions. There was also the challenge of delivering content to people with different skill levels. To combat this, Yarra Libraries recruited more volunteers to assist with the delivery of the project. There was also the language barriers that existed in delivering to people with different English language proficiency. There was a range of strategies that were put in place to overcome this including members bringing family members along to help with translations.

One of the challenges that presented was that the partnership and communications within the project were very time consuming, however regular phone calls and emails to keep in contact were found to be the most effective way to overcome this. In order to meet the challenge of more participants, they had to purchase a higher number of laptops and ensure appropriate software was uploaded and configured. The extra funding helped with this. They overcame the challenge of enough resources and time to prepare and deliver course content by utilising the effective partnerships to assist with this.

## Community Engagement and Partnership

A key measure of success was the ongoing partnership between BANH, CNH and Yarra Libraries. Through delivery, they drew on each other's strengths to deliver the project. Similarly, their partnership with the local community meant recruiting participants was easy and their communication and attendance was regular, respectful and efficient.



## Success factors
- High participation and completion rates
- Partnership with community and Yarra libraries
- Ongoing attendance at the Richmond drop-in
- Recruitment of two trainers to deliver in Collingwood
- Volunteering to support the drop-in at Richmond

## Learnings
- They initially recruited people with low-medium digital literacy levels which meant course content required more thought, however it mde the delivery of the project easier.
- Partnerships and strong relationships with the participants were a key component of the project.
- Remuneration of participants was an important incentive including payment to attend and a laptop upon completion.

## What happens next

- Two of the participants have been mentoring attendees at their regular drop-in computer support session. They have created a few sessions including how to download your travel vaccination certificate to support their community to travel home.
- Collingwood is still in the execution phase of the project. Two participants are assisting in the delivery of this project.
- Yarra Libraries and BANH continue to deliver their drop-in sessions at the Factory in Richmond.



## Recommendations

 Six-weeks was insufficient time to teach the participants enough for them to become trainers.
- Employing a project worker could have assisted with the delivery of the project.
- Researching, purchasing and uploading necessary software for the laptops was the most difficult and time consuming aspect of the project.

# Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre (CNLC)

## Context

Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre's (CNLC) mission is to work with the community of Carlton and surrounding areas, particularly those who experience disadvantage, to connect, learn, share skills and improve participation in work and community life. CNLC are an RTO, teaching English as an Additional Language, Learn Local and Neighbourhood House. Their participants are mainly migrants and refugees from marginalised communities with a significant proportion of public housing residents.

During the Covid lockdowns it became apparent how serious and debilitating the digital divide problem was for Carlton residents. In response, CNLC sourced 150 computers from University of Melbourne to distribute for free to residents from the Carlton housing estate. They also distributed a small number of dongles with data.

During this time CNLC also commenced advocacy work to have a long term response to the issue so it's not forgotten after lockdowns. In particular, they founded the Community Agencies for Digital Inclusion (CADI) advocacy group comprising of Neighbourhood Houses in the region and allies such as City of Melbourne, University of Melbourne and ACCAN. However, there was a missing piece to their work which skilled up clients to use their computers. While CNLC delivers a computer course they identified that many of their clients were not skilled enough or even confident to attend a computer course. By delivering a digital mentoring program, funded by the department, they have been able to fill that gap in starting to train up clients in basic computer skills so they can then transition in to computer classes.

# Delivery

This project set out to recruit 12 skilled volunteer mentors to be matched up with 12 clients and to give the mentorees lap top computers to train on. The program resides in the community development department of CNLC and aimed to encourage self-sufficiency, resilience and knowledge in relation to digital computer usage for mentorees, with the opportunity for mentees to enrol in a computer course to continue their learning upon completion of the program.

CNLC digital mentor program was delivered in 5 stages: project planning and recruitment of a project officer & trainer, recruitment of volunteer tutors and mentees, sourcing computers for mentees, training for mentors and delivering mentor sessions with mentees.

## Stage 1: Project Planning & recruitment

A detailed project plan was developed for the project, understanding it was a short and ambitious project. A budget was drawn up, an evaluation plan and the project commenced.

CNLC opted to employ a project officer to deliver the project and a contract trainer to support mentors. The decision to split these two roles was made as they required different skills and experience. They ran a recruitment process to get skilled candidates and then inducted them into the project and CNLC as new staff. Having these roles helped to resource this area of work which delivered outcomes on time and in budget and added to the professionalism of the project.

## Stage 2: Recruitment of volunteer mentors and mentees

They wanted to recruit skilled volunteers from the community who could not only share their digital expertise but also work with disadvantaged members of the community they may not otherwise meet. For volunteer mentors they created an EOI and distributed it through their networks. A leaflet was created to attract volunteer mentors. They also promoted the roles at community events such as end of year celebrations from community organisations. This resulted in the recruitment of 11 mentors from a range of backgrounds including staff at the University of Melbourne, general community members and mentors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Every mentor and mentee completed a police check. Mentees were provided with laptops funded by the project, in-kind ACFE funding and donations from University of Melbourne.



## Stage 3: Sourcing devices

They sourced 6 lap tops from the University of Melbourne and bought a further 3 devices. They opted to give lap tops to the mentees so they could take them to their mentor sessions and have the mentor help them set it up and get familiar with their own device. This ensured ongoing benefits for the mentees beyond the life of this mentor program and the opportunity to tailor their computers to the learning outcomes.

## Stage 4: Training for digital mentors

It was important to provide training to mentors as they were all volunteers and had different levels of experience to be a mentor. They had planned a face to face training session but due to Covid, they had to switch this to online. The training consultant developed a presentation for the mentors which included understanding different learning styles and the best approach to mentoring as well as content delivery for the mentor sessions. They also created a moodle platform for trainers to access further resources and post questions and learn from each other's experience.

## Stage 5: Delivering mentor sessions

They requested mentors to deliver a minimum of 5 sessions with their mentee for one to two hours every fortnight. They did not do the mentor sessions in people's homes but in public venues such as libraries and cafes. Mentors were asked to arrange session times and meeting spots with their mentees.

The content of the mentoring included learning how to turn their computers on, opening an email account, getting familiar with Office programs and accessing services such as MyGov. The majority of their mentees were seeking to build their skills and confidence, with focus on education portals and resume building.

## Challenges

There were a number of challenges to deliver this project: Covid interference, mentees having adequate time to participate in their mentor sessions and some mentors dropping out due to being overcommitted with other things.

Matching mentors with mentees was initially challenging to negotiate their different time commitments. For mentees it became apparent that they had many commitments aside from this program, including family commitments, health problems and studying English. The initial gathering of police checks for all participants was also a timely administrative task.

CNLC learned from delivering this program for the first time. It was delayed initially due to covid restrictions which meant we had 4 months to deliver. In the future having a face to face training session where we invite the mentors and the mentees to attend to meet each other for the first time would make it smoother.



## Evaluation Process and Results

A phone survey with mentees was conducted when they entered the program and at the conclusion. All of the mentees reported having very basic computer skills before this program and having low confidence levels using computers. Out of a scale of 1 -5 with 1 being no experience and 5 being experienced, mentees were asked to rate their skills before the program. 3 mentees rated their skills as no experience (1), 5 mentees rated their skills at level 2 and 1 mentee rated their skills as intermediate (3).

However, building confidence with using computers and increasing their skills levels was the most reported need. All mentees reported that they would rate their skill level higher by 2 points and that they were a lot more confident to use their computer. All mentees reported that they really enjoyed working with their mentors and valued their patience and knowledge.

## Outcomes and Achievements

11 mentors were recruited with 6 remaining engaged throughout the whole program. 6 laptops were donated to mentees to keep. 5 mentees were confident enough by the end of the mentor program to enrol in a CNLC computer class and continue their learning. 3 matched mentor/mentees have continued to meet after the conclusion of the program.



## Community Engagement and Partnership

CNLC partnered with the University of Melbourne to donate laptops. They also allocated some of CNLC's ACFE funding to purchase laptops. Promoting this mentor opportunity to the general public also represented a partnership with people who otherwise would not have known about CNLC.

## Communication and Media

CNLC utilised Facebook and leaflet promotion of the mentor roles to gain interest in the program. Communication with mentees was all by phone as Covid restrictions meant this was the best way to stay engaged with the mentees.

## Success factors, Learnings and Recommendations

CNLC found this to be a very successful program that filled a gap for their community. As skills for mentees prior to commencing their mentoring were very basic they were not ready to enrol in a computer class. Matching skilled mentors with mentees was both rewarding for mentors and mentees.

## What happens next

The Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre began the Digital Mentorship Program to build the confidence and skills level of those experiencing the digital divide and entering the digital economy. Five out of the six mentees have transitioned in to CNLC computer classes on the completion of our program.

Now that they have all the resources completed and contacts for digital mentors, CNLC will be able to continue this program beyond the funding. A second round of mentors and mentees aim to be matched by June 2022. They have a waiting list for both mentors and mentees who have contacted CNLC after hearing about the program. They will continue to work with University of Melbourne to access devices for the community but now that they can deliver a basic introduction program it will ensure the success for our community.

## CASE STUDY: Tewelde Kidane & Dhruv Sharma

Tewelde and Dhruv met each other in February 2022 for Dhruv to mentor him in basic computer skills. Tewelde was donated a laptop from CNLC and he has been working with Dhruv to build confidence and skills in relation to computer usage. Dhruv is a student at the University of Melbourne and has enjoyed getting to know Tewelde and teaching him about his computer.



Tewelde is an Eritrean man who came to Australia in 1989. He has never before had the opportunity to learn how to use a computer and has relied on others to help him with forms and job applications. He is a busy man, involved in water projects in Africa as well as a health concierge at the Carlton public housing estate during Covid. He also chairs a Victorian Eritrean community organisation. Tewelde is very committed with continuing to gain skills and education to support his communities. For this reason he said "I am proud to be part of the computer mentoring program of CNLC. I have great vision and ambition to help or support society in general."

During the first two weeks of the Mentorship, they discussed the areas of focus which Tewelde preferred to gain experience and knowledge. Since he had never operated a computer before, they decided the best action would be to start with an introduction of computer basics such as turning it on or off and moving and clicking the mouse cursor. They then moved on to more complex tasks such as connecting to a public Wi-Fi and browsing the internet and sending and receiving emails. They have also covered writing and editing documents and sending them via email.

Tewelde said that Dhruv was informative and supportive and he likes working with him. Dhruv said that, "Tewelde's skills have increased, he once viewed computer usage as confusing and now has successfully started an email account. He also enjoys practising with his computer at home. His goal is to build his confidence and contribute back to his community through digital awareness and support." Tewelde said now that he has computer skills he will "look for a job and help for my future to work with the community and other agencies."

Tewelde reflected that the program has been so helpful for him and he hopes that the program continues and "to contact as many people as possible in our community because they need skills because everything now days needs computer skills." Tewelde and Dhruv will continue their mentoring sessions beyond the time of this program.

# North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre (NMLL)

## Context

North Melbourne Language and Learning (NMLL) is at the base of a public housing tower in in North Melbourne and has operated for more than 32 years. It is an RTO, LLO and Neighbourhood House. NMLL works with adult members of the diverse communities of the North Melbourne housing estate. NMLL's primary focus is the provision of EAL (Initial to 3), complementary pre-accredited language, job skill and digital literacy courses.

NMLL provides community development activities intended to encourage engagement, connection and participation. The community development projects run at NMLL include the Digital Inclusion Strategy, Integrate, Paving the Way Forward, Community Learning Champions, Volunteering: a Pathway to Employment and a range of cultural and community engagement activities and events that celebrate diversity.

NMLL had identified that there was a need to provide further digital mentoring for the local community in a range of languages to meet to the needs of the local CALD community. This expanded language offering enabled digital skills to be taught to community members that would otherwise not be able to engage. This project also enabled NMLL to expand the support given to the community through their Tech Connect Drop in program where community members can get specialised assistance to meet their individual digital needs.
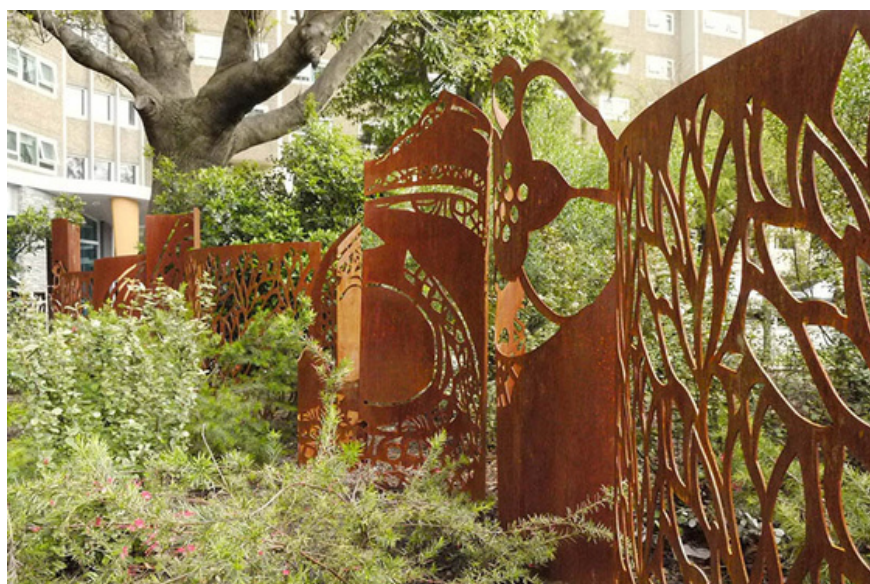
## Delivery

NMLL undertook recruitment of digital mentors. This process was interrupted by the Covid lockdowns and subsequent reluctance of the local community to come back to the centre even after restrictions were lifted.

Five digital mentors were engaged over the course of the project. Of the five, two dropped out of the mentoring program not long after being recruited. One fell into the category of being reluctant to engage post lockdown while the other found other paid employment after being employed as a digital mentor. The remaining 3 mentors have been employed and are providing digital support to community members. Between them, they cover the languages of English, Mandarin and Vietnamese, meeting the identified need of providing support in a range of languages.



The promotion and operation of the Tech Connect drop in IT hub has continued operating after hours on Thursday with the recent addition of Sunday afternoons to meet more community members needs. 16 participants have connected with these mentors through the Tech Connect drop in program.

The Digital mentoring program operated in additional classes at NMLL as well. There were 43 participants in the English as Additional language classes. A Mandarin conversion class has recently commenced which includes a digital skills component, with 12 community members participating so far.

Every participant engaged at NMLL completed a language and numeracy assessment which is used to place the student in the most appropriate class. NMLL use an integrated delivery model and all EAL students are also enrolled in digital literacy classes.

## Challenges

There have been many challenges that affected the delivery of this program stemming from COVID. These included:
- Interruption and delays to the start of class and the start of Tech Connect
- Reluctance of student and digital mentors to engage
- Digital mentors getting paid work and becoming unavailable.



## Evaluation Process and Results

Participant feedback from the additional support provided by the digital mentors through the Tech Connect program has been:
- Great service
- Good space to learn
- Available help is appreciated
- It is great to have technology to use (laptops and internet connection) with help available as well

## Communication and Media

A range of different communication mediums were used throughout the project. NMLL found that word of mouth and promotion through networks was the best means to promote the program to the community. NMLL has also developed WhatsApp channels with local residents which has been useful. However NMLL have identified that there are gaps with communication channels and residents often advise them that they are unaware of local services, classes and activities. This has led NMLL to identify that the current strategies are inadequate and are looking at ways to address it.

## Learnings

Through this program and through their work in their communities, NMLL have identified that strong relationships built on trust have been found to be the foundation and are essential to work with the CALD communities.

NMLL have seen that a robust IT system, decent equipment and having adult educators skilled in the use IT is essential, but should be seen as a means to learn and explore. However, IT and digital literacy skills have to be a means to an end not the focus. Although, having adequate resources like having devices that can be loaned to community members and providing free internet is fundamental to bridging the digital divide.



What happens next -
The digital mentors that have been engaged through this project will continue to be employed as long as they are able to. The use of multi bilingual mentors will assist the development of digital skills but they will also build important connections with communities. This is seen as vital by NMLL as this will in turn assist them with understanding and responding to needs of the community. As such, NMLL will seek funding to engage bi-lingual staff whenever possible moving forward.

## Recommendations

1. Provide funding for all Neighbourhood Houses with the flexibility to allow up to half of the funding to be for the engagement of bi-lingual digital inclusion mentors. Making this funding recurrent is important.

2. Provide LLOs with infrastructure grants so they can transform themselves into local IT hubs. The funding should allow the acquisition of computing equipment for loan, the development of a robust IT and WIFI system and free internet.