PAVING A PATH FOR DIGITAL EQUITY AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN PEEL REGION

Workshop Chair: Jessica Kwik – Peel Newcomer Strategy Group at United Way of Greater Toronto

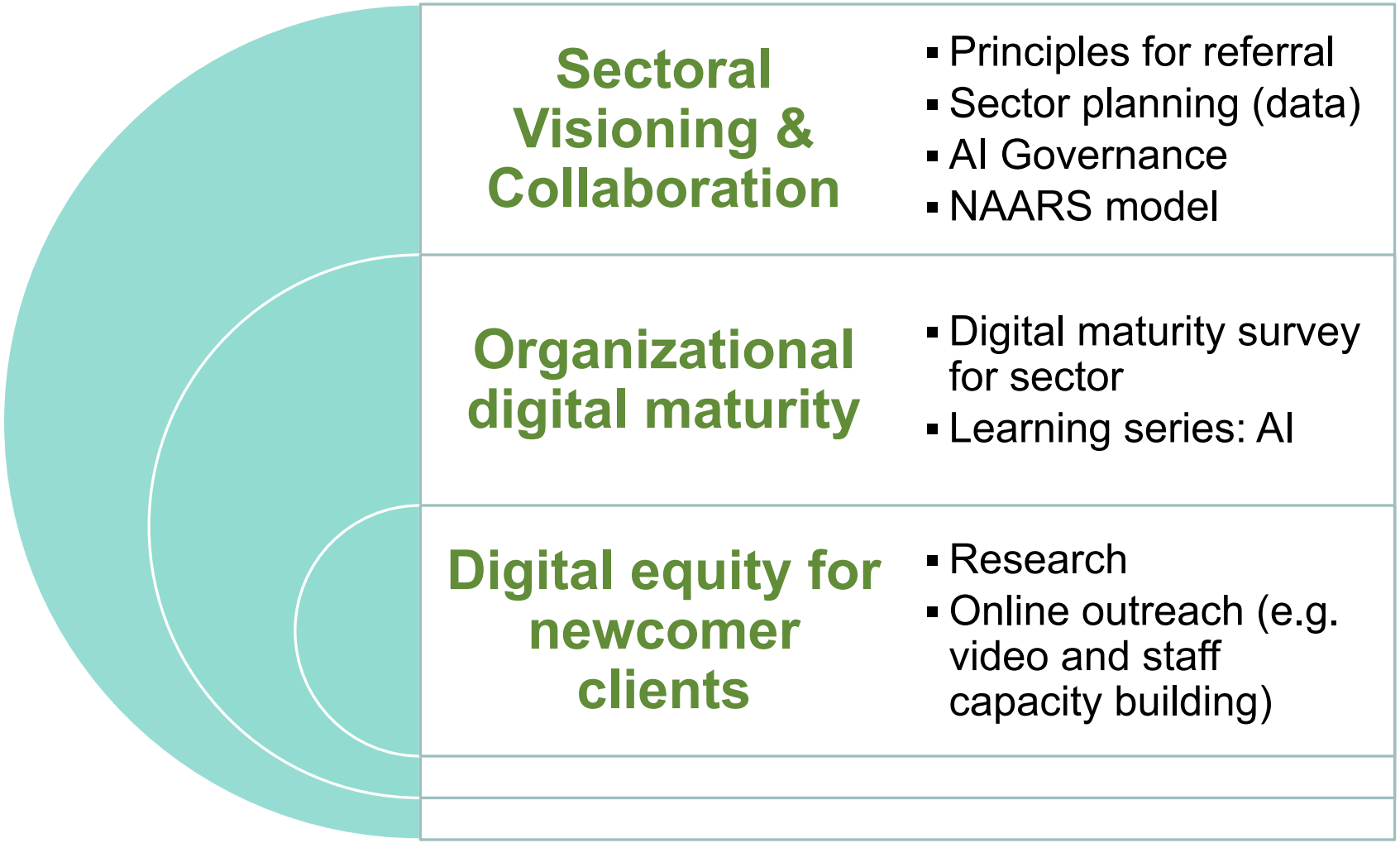
15 March 2025

The Mississaugas conceived of their relationship to the land in spiritual terms. They did not believe that land could be ‘sold’, or that their rights to use land and access resources for food and living, could be absolutely and permanently signed away.

(Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, “The Mississaugas of the Credit: Historical Territory, Resource and Land Use” https://mncfn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Mississaugas-of-the-Credit-Historical-Territory-Resource-and-Land-Use.pdf)

AGENDA

1. Workshop Chair Welcome
2. Exploring Digital Equity for Newcomer Services in Peel - PNSG, Peel CAS' CWICE, PMC
3. Digital Maturity in the Settlement Sector – PNSG/Code for Canada
4. Settlement Sector Digital Transformation – Marco Campana
5. Q&A


Sectoral Visioning & Collaboration
▪ Principles for referral
▪ Sector planning (data)
▪ AI Governance
▪ NAARS model
Organizational digital maturity
▪ Digital maturity survey for sector
▪ Learning series: AI
Digital equity for newcomer clients
▪ Research
▪ Online outreach (e.g. video and staff capacity building)

EXPLORING DIGITAL EQUITY FOR NEWCOMER SERVICES: PERSPECTIVES ON ACCESS AND CHALLENGES IN PEEL REGION

Research Partners and Background

- Service Delivery Network
- Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
- Peel Children's Aid Society Child Welfare Immigration Centre for Excellence
- Peel Multicultural Council

PEEL NEWCOMER STRATEGY GROUP

Peel CAS CWICE | Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence

PMC Peel Multicultural Council
"helping people reach their goals"
Since 1977

Research Objectives

1. Understand the barriers to accessing digital settlement services in Peel region.
2. Examine newcomer experiences with both digital and in-person services.
3. Inform improvements in service delivery to meet diverse newcomer needs.

Research Questions

1. Which newcomer groups are not accessing digital settlement services?
2. What factors hinder access to these services?

Research Ethics

1. This project was approved by the Community Research Ethics Board

METHODOLOGY & DATA COLLECTION

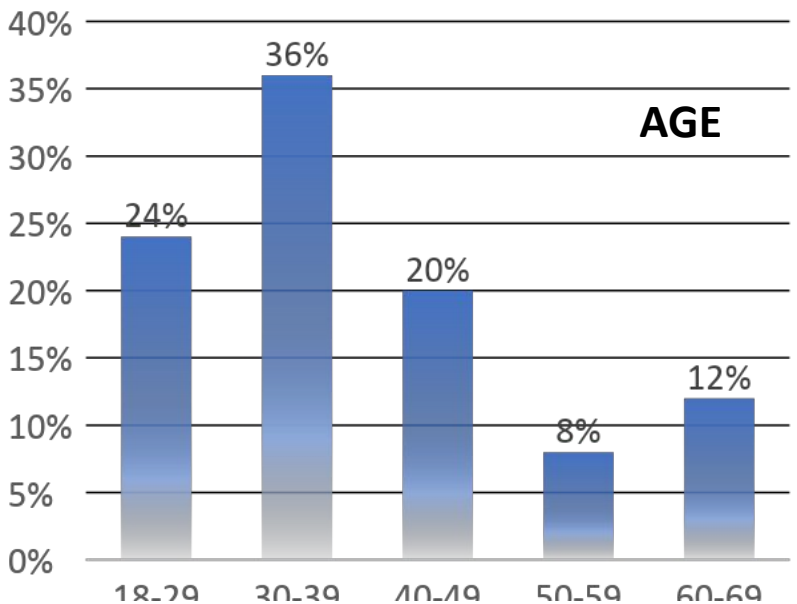
Document Scan

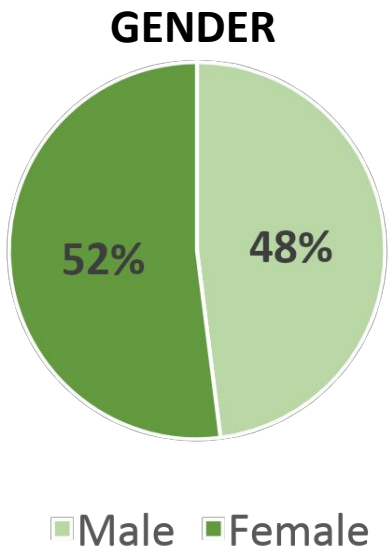
Interviews with 25 diverse newcomers

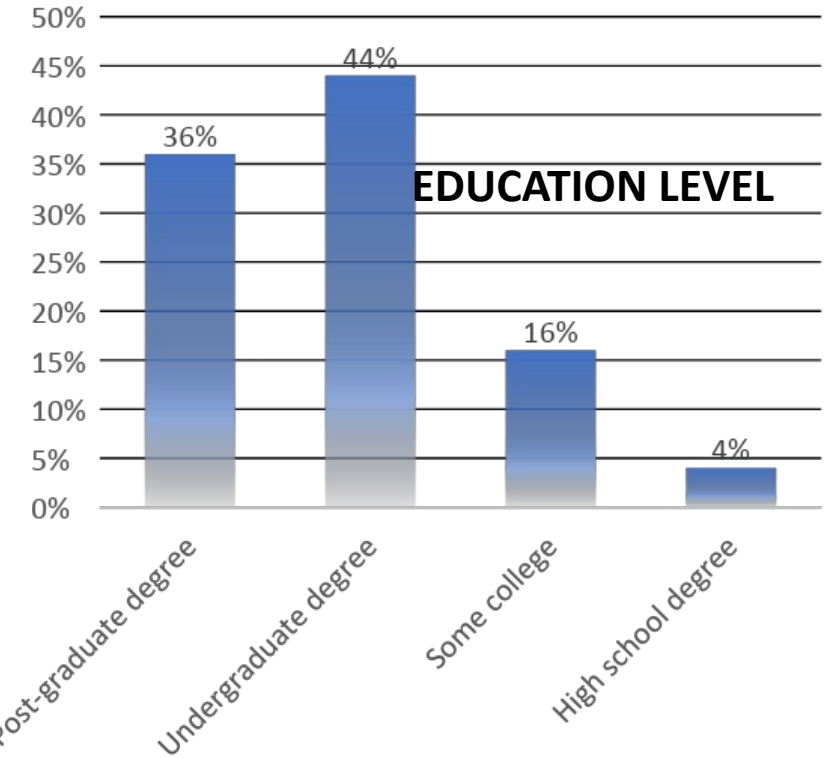
Surveys with 16 Service Providers (30 responses)

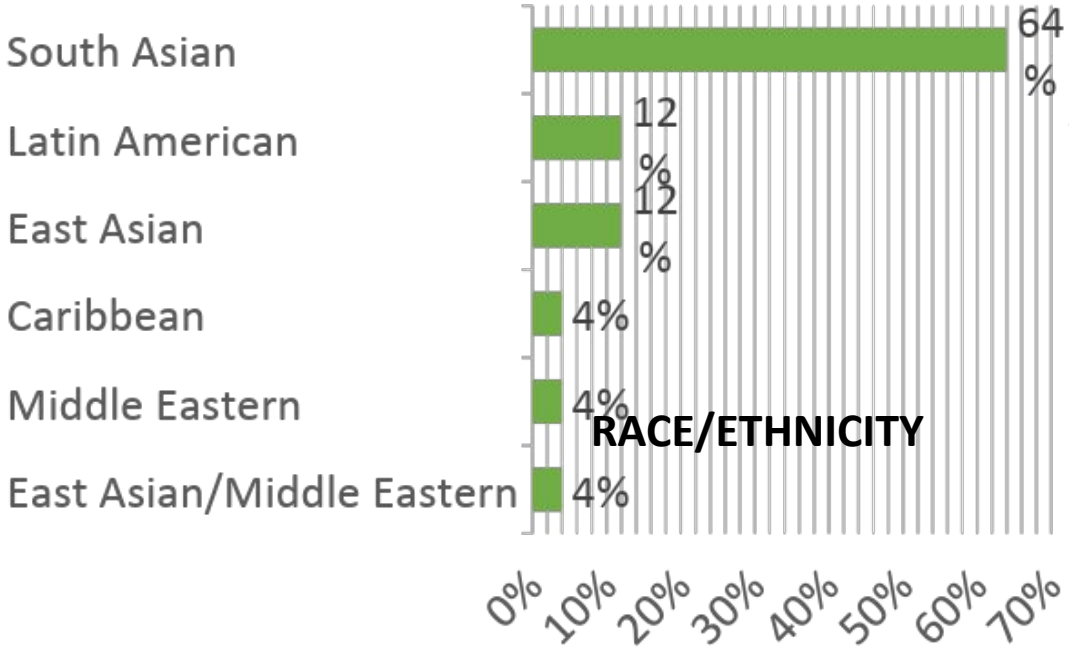
Peel Multicultural Council's Digital Literacy Exchange Program

Sample Demographics

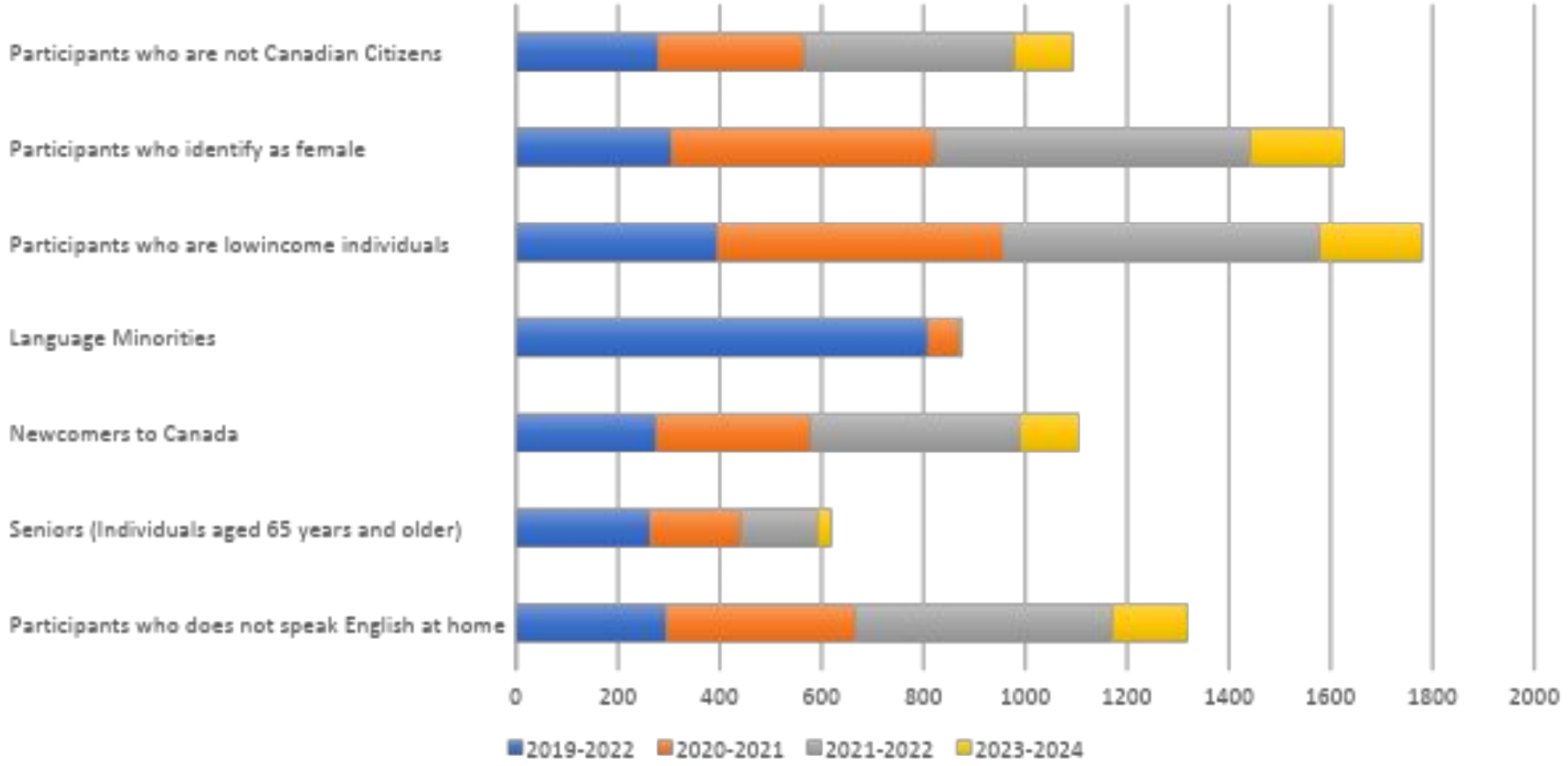








Service Provider Organizations



Peel Multicultural Council's Digital Literacy Exchange Program (DLEP): Targeted Under-Represented Groups

Which groups are not accessing digital settlement services?

1. Lack of Digital Literacy

Newcomers unable or lacking confidence to use devices (computers, smartphones) rely on in-person services.

2. Language Barriers

Digital services mostly in English/French; non-fluent newcomers struggle with accessing content.

3. Family Support

Newcomers with settled family members often rely on them for settlement needs, bypassing digital services.

Barriers faced by Newcomers

Digital Literacy

- Lack of digital skills.
- Complex tasks (e.g., screensharing).

Language Barriers

- Limited English/French fluency.
- Prefer in-person services with native-language staff.

Awareness & Privacy Concerns

- Unaware of digital service options.
- Concerns about data privacy, camera use, and online scams.

Barriers faced by Newcomers

In Person Connections

- Preference for face-to-face support for reassurance and clarity.

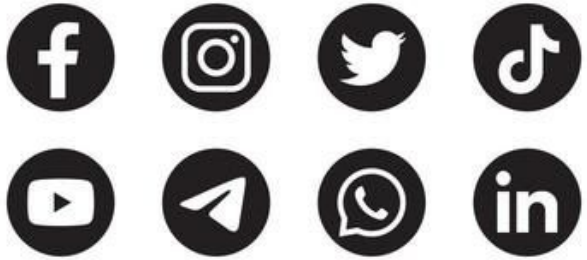
Technology & Cost Issues

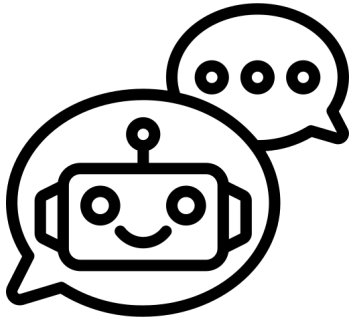
- High costs and outdated devices.
- Technical difficulties.

Additional Factors

- Immigration status
- Professional networking and employment support
- Childcare needs

Service Provider Experience with Providing Digital Services





73% of SPOs reporting frequent use of digital services by newcomers

60% of providers received digital service training

Despite high levels of use by and high levels of training for providers,

16.7 % still feel uncomfortable with tools.

Key Recommendations

How can we meaningfully collaborate to advance these goals?

Increased Awareness

Targeted outreach & partnerships to promote digital service options

Enhance Digital Literacy

Tailored digital literacy training for newcomers & staff

Address Language Barriers

Simplify content, offer audio/video guides, & multilingual support, referrals to language-specific services

THANK YOU

Digital Maturity in the Peel-Halton Settlement Sector

CODE for CANADA

“Everyone is trying to do ‘digital transformation’ in their own way.”

— Leader of a Peel-Halton settlement agency

How might the Peel-Halton settlement sector embrace digital transformation...

FROM A SOLO PATH... ➡ **...TO A SHARED JOURNEY?**

Who we are

Code for Canada is a national nonprofit using tech and design to improve life in Canada.

We partner with public-benefit organizations (like you!) to help ensure that everyone in Canada has access to inclusive, equitable, and responsive public services that meet them where they are.

Today's presenters

Dorothy Eng
CEO

Kay Nadalin
Design Chapter Lead

“We need best practices and guidance for agencies who are all trying to ‘figure out’ digital.”

— Leader of a Peel-Halton settlement agency

Digital maturity explores how well an organization is *prepared to embrace* **digital transformation**.

Digital transformation is the active use of data and technology as ***enablers*** for better service delivery.

Code for Canada's Digital Maturity Assessment

- Client-centric service design and delivery
- Oversight and support for digital
- Practices and platforms for data sharing
- Infrastructure and resources for digital
- Ways of working
- Skills and hiring

Levels of Digital Maturity

The assessment provided a moment-in-time snapshot of digital maturity based on 7 levels.

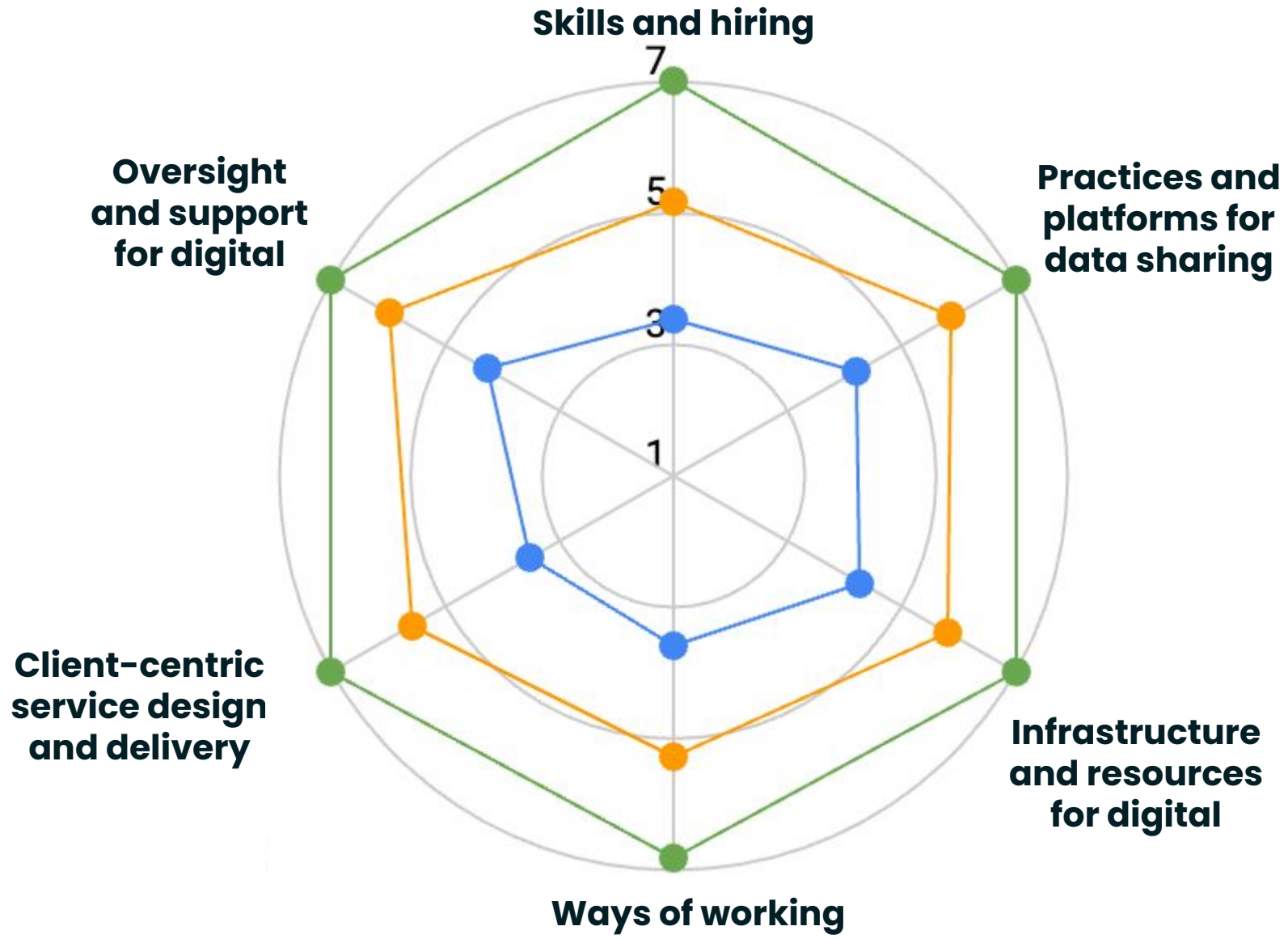
Level of Digital Maturity	**1** **Limited**	**2** **Emerging**	**3** **Developing**	**4** **Moderate**	**5** **Proficient**	**6** **Advanced**	**7** **Leading**
What this looks like for an agency	Minimal digital infrastructure, paper-based processes are the norm.	Initial digitization efforts are underway, with limited capabilities. Simple data collection and digital storage systems are in place.	Many processes are digitized, with internal applications used for specific tasks. Basic data management systems with basic analysis capabilities are in place.	Majority of processes are digitized, with integrated systems for collaboration and efficiency. Functional data management systems are in place.	Processes are data-driven, user-focused, and streamlined with technology as enablers. Robust data management systems are in place, with some analytic capabilities.	Digital capabilities are seamlessly integrated into all aspects of operations. Sophisticated data management systems and analytics are in place.	Has transformative impact on the sector through innovative use of digital technologies and data-driven strategies.

Digital Maturity Assessment Results

Current state of the sector

Legend

- Highest maturity
- Average maturity
- Lowest maturity



Note: These results reflect the 15 agencies who participated in the assessment.

Digital Maturity Assessment Results

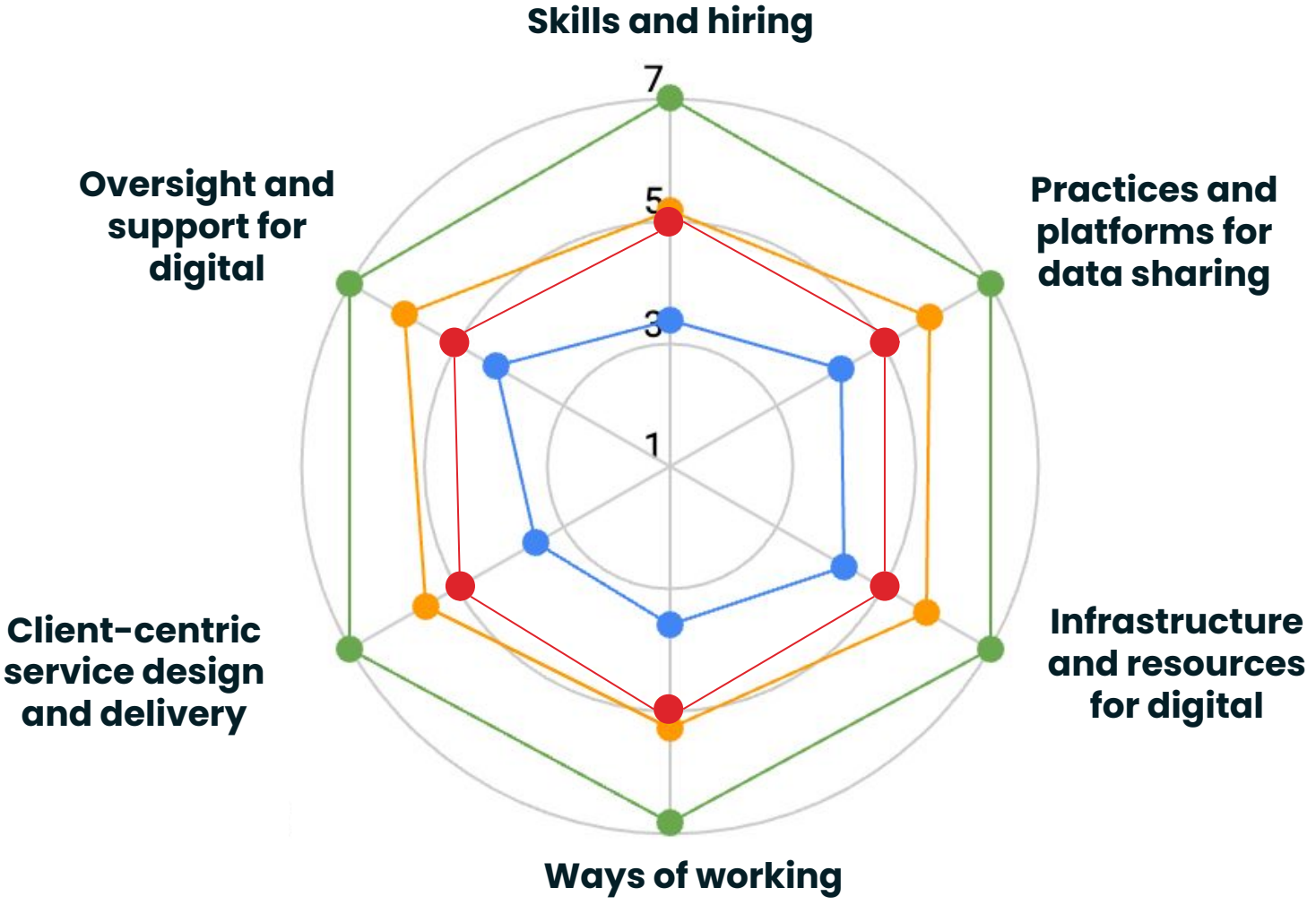
Indicators *(on a scale of 1-7)*	**Lowest**	**Average**	**Highest**
Client-centric service design and delivery	**3.5**	**5.6**	**7**
Oversight and support for digital	**4.3**	**6**	**7**
Practices and platforms for data sharing	**4.2**	**5.9**	**7**
Infrastructure and resources for digital	**4.3**	**5.8**	**7**
Ways of working	**3.6**	**5.3**	**6.8**
Skills and hiring	**3.4**	**5.2**	**7**

Note: These results reflect the 15 agencies who participated in the assessment.

Recommended Minimum Level of Digital Maturity

Proposed level for the sector

Level of Digital Maturity	**5** **Proficient**



Legend

- Recommended min level of maturity
- Highest maturity (current state)
- Average maturity (current state)
- Lowest maturity (current state)

Note: These results reflect the 15 agencies who participated in the assessment.

Best practices for Digital Maturity:
Level 5 - Proficient

These best practices are agency-specific — meaning an agency's unique context will determine the timing of these recommendations.

As each agency enhances their digital maturity to meet or exceed the recommended level, the collective digital maturity of the sector will increase too.

Client-centric service design and delivery

- ❑ Client feedback regularly informs process improvements to existing services, and the creation of new services
- ❑ Client's information is only collected once
- ❑ Services are still accessible in non-digital formats as needed

Oversight and support for digital

- ❑ "Digital" has a presence in the agency's strategic plan
- ❑ IT staff are involved in relevant decisions about technology usage and procurement — not just implementation
- ❑ Policies and procedures effectively govern the use of data and technology

Practices and platforms for data sharing

- ❑ Standardized practices are in place to guide how data is shared internally and externally
- ❑ Data is readily available for staff to assess and make service delivery decisions
- ❑ Platforms allow for secure transfer (import/export) of client data

Infrastructure and resources for digital

- ❑ Staff have access to modern, high-quality, and well-functioning technology
- ❑ There is a sustained budget for digital
- ❑ Cyber threats are centrally managed and staff receive ongoing training about cybersecurity
- ❑ Data is backed up at least weekly, and recovery processes are tested regularly

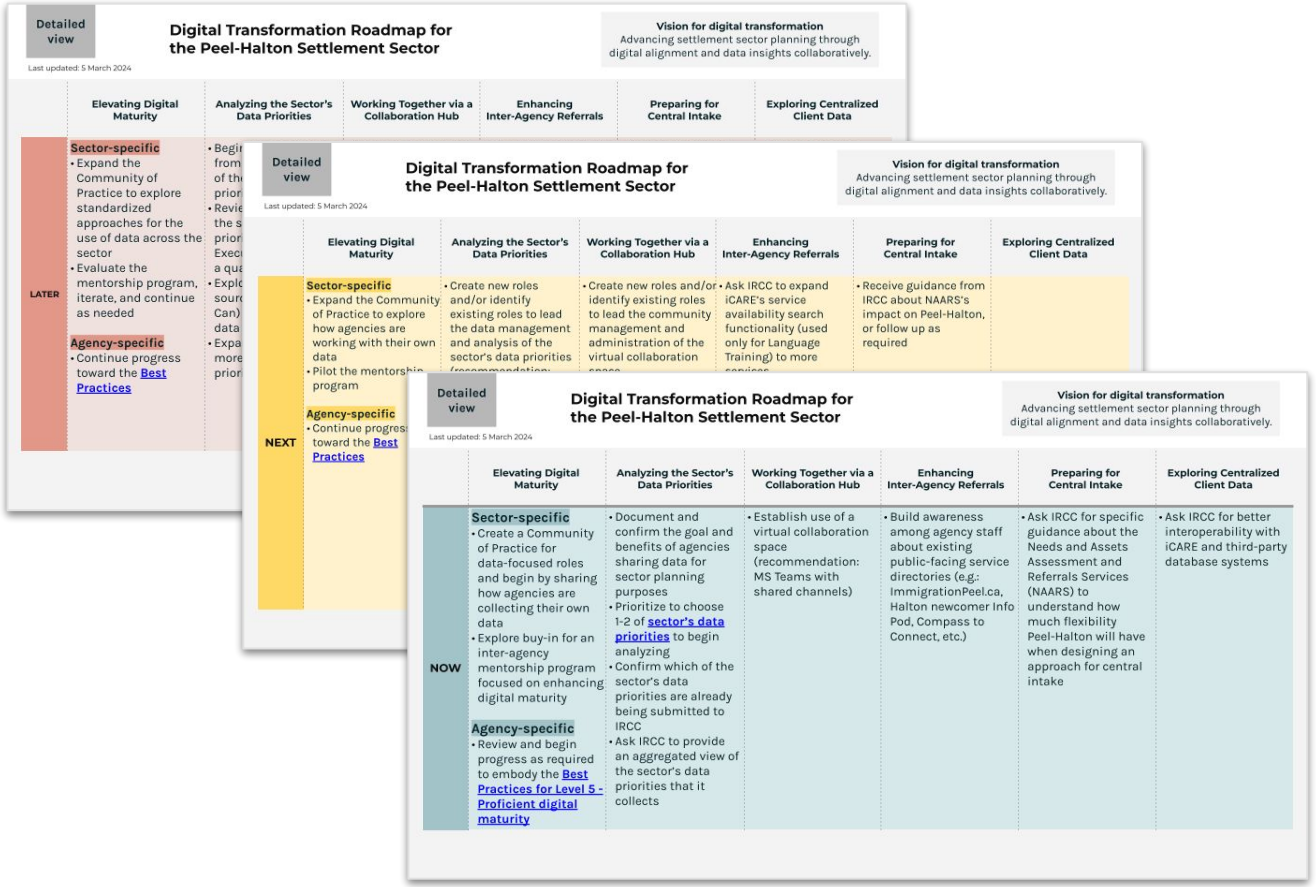
Ways of working

- ❑ Experimentation and learning from failure is encouraged
- ❑ Learnings are shared widely within teams and beyond
- ❑ Services have clear owners with autonomy to make decisions

Skills and hiring

- ❑ Digital-focused professional development is available to staff at least once per year
- ❑ Dedicated staff and/or external consultants are responsible for digital transformation roles related to managing the agency's data and technology needs

Digital Transformation Roadmap for Peel-Halton Settlement Sector



The Roadmap's Action Categories

To achieve its vision for digital transformation, the sector will...

1. Elevate Digital Maturity
2. Advance the Sector's Data Priorities
3. Work Together via a Collaboration Hub
4. Enhance Inter-Agency Referrals
5. Prepare for Central Intake
6. Explore Centralized Client Data

Thank you!

Settlement Sector Digital Transformation

Marco Campana

Settlement Sector Core Values

- Access
- Inclusion
- Client empowerment
- User-defined services
- Holistic approach
- Respect for the individual
- Cultural sensitivity
- Community development
- Collaboration
- Accountability
- Orientation towards positive change
- Reliability

From Canadian Council for Refugees - Canadian National Settlement Service Standards Framework (2000)

Mobile-First Approach

Newcomers use mobile devices. A mobile-first approach is needed in service delivery & communication strategies.

Messaging App Preference

Clients strongly prefer messaging apps like WhatsApp for communication.

Digital Literacy Divide

Digital literacy gaps exist among both clients and staff. There is a need for ongoing training and support.

Adaptation to Rapid Tech Change

Staff and organizations struggle to keep up with the pace of technological advancements and integrate new tools.

Customized Technology Training

Strong demand for ongoing, tailored technology training for both staff and clients to enhance digital skills and service delivery.

Balancing Tech & Human Touch

A need to balance technological efficiency with maintaining personal connections in service delivery.

Privacy and Security Concerns

Concerns about maintaining client confidentiality and data security while leveraging new technologies.

Strategic Technology Integration

Organizations need guidance on developing comprehensive, long-term strategies for integrating technology into their service delivery models.

Need for Integrated Systems

A desire for more streamlined, integrated technological solutions to manage client data and service delivery efficiently.

Resource Constraints

Limited access to up-to-date hardware, software, & stable internet connections poses challenges for organizations & clients.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

"Digital Inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to access and use technology" (NDIA)

Hardware: Access to devices

Increase access to appropriate hardware and technical support to residents in need.

Connectivity: Access to affordable, reliable and fast internet for all

Expand access to the internet and broadband infrastructure for those facing barriers, including low-income and rural residents

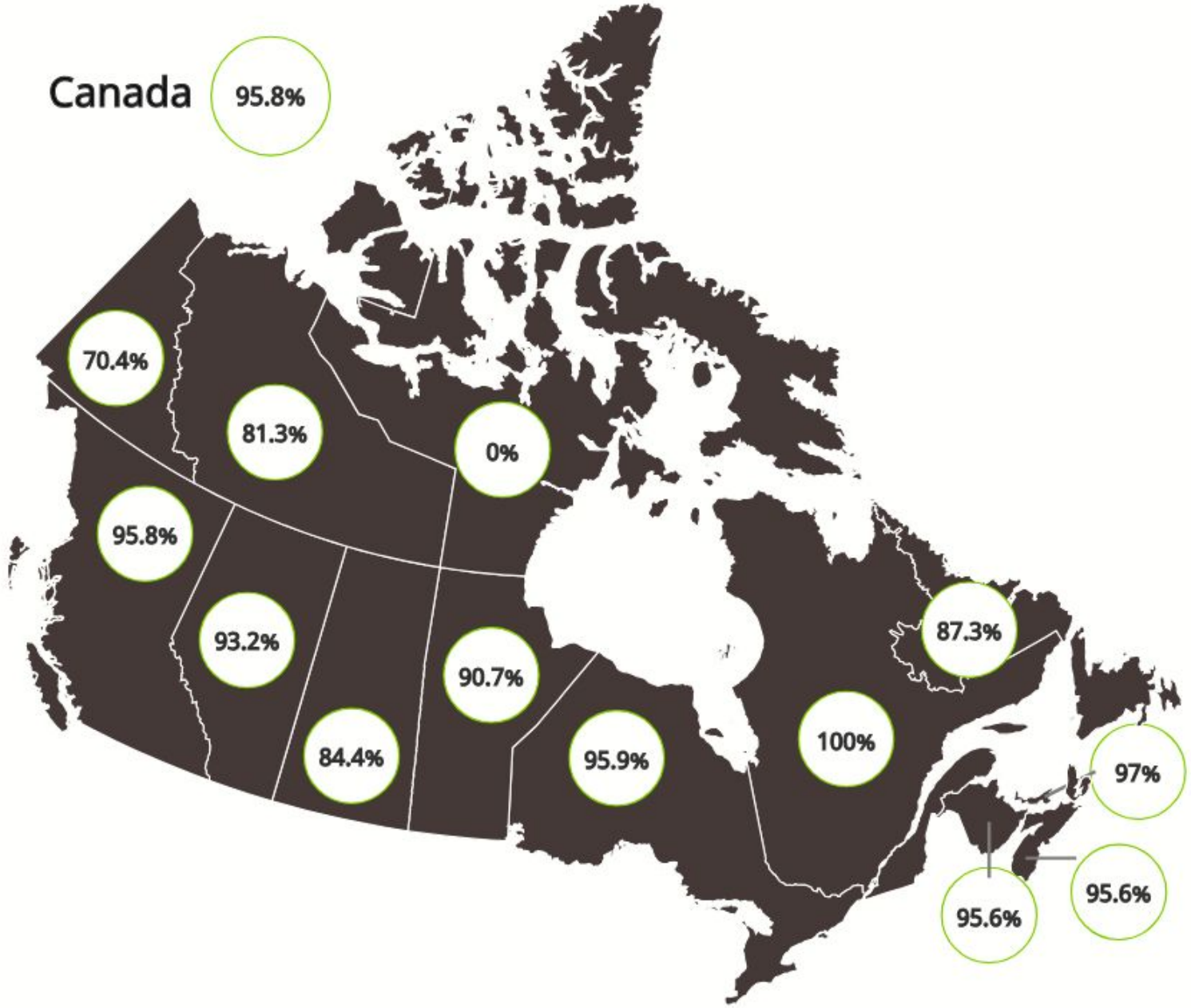
Ability to Use: Digital Literacy

Train residents in digital skills to increase access to services, equity in accessing virtual learning for high school graduation, employability and more

Capacity of the nonprofit sector

Increase the capacity of the nonprofit sector to provide services digitally including for residents for low technical capacity

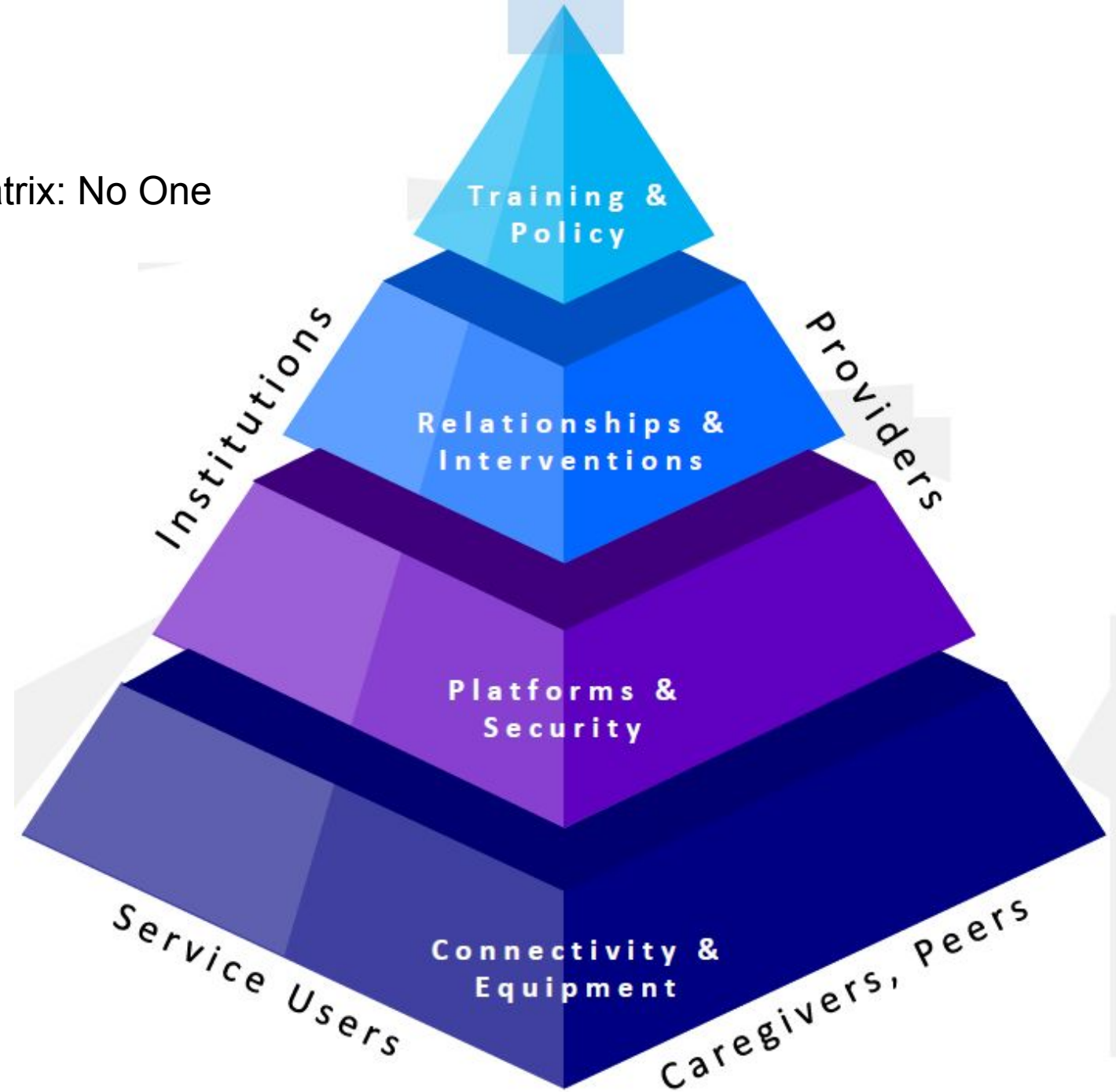
High-Speed Internet Access Dashboard



Canada

Progress as of November 2024

Virtual Care Equity Matrix: No One Left Behind



Digital Settlement Agency

Baselines in hybrid service delivery

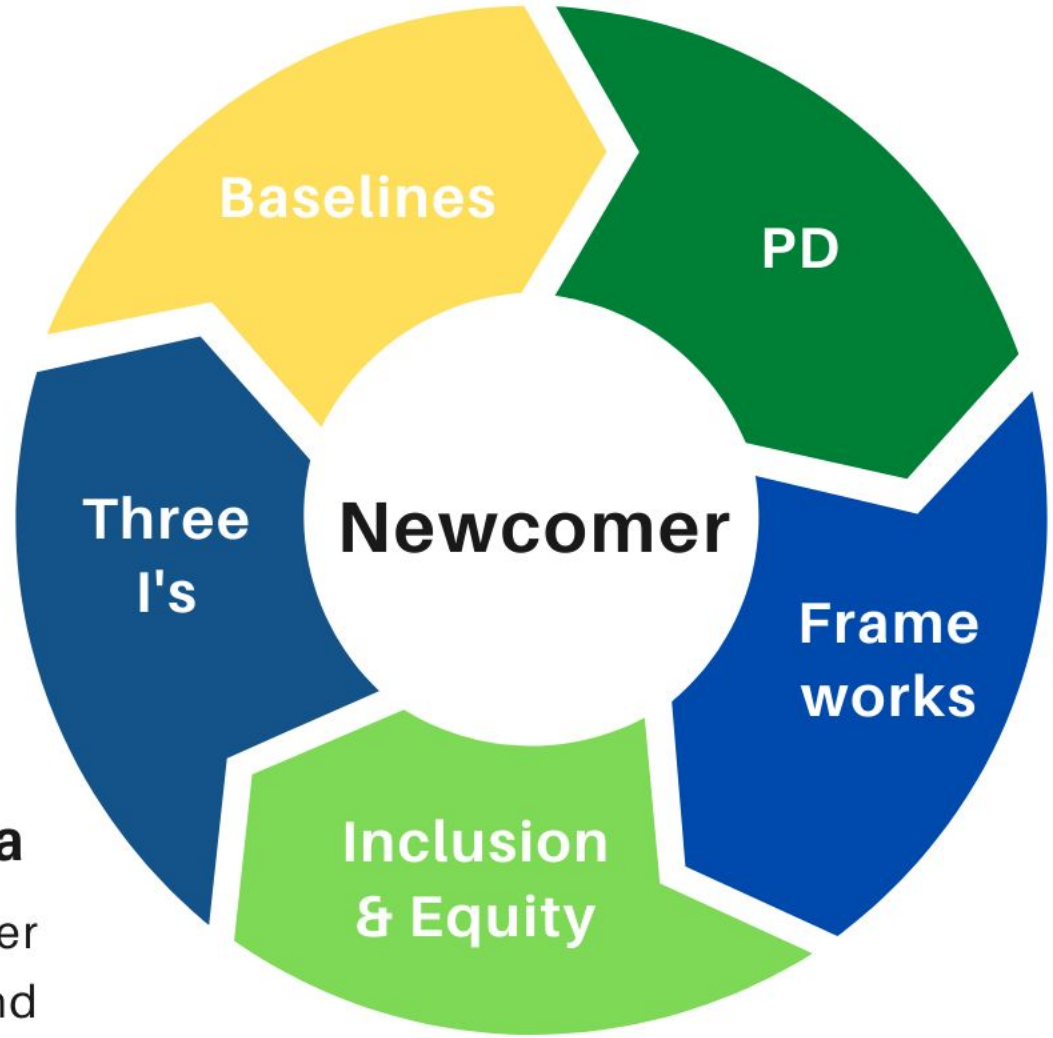
A floor of infrastructure & competencies

Three I's of Immigrant Integration

Intentionality, Instruments, Investments

Newcomer-Centric Data

Creating a seamless Newcomer settlement experience and journey.



Professional Development

Competencies framework for PD. Knowledge mobilization.

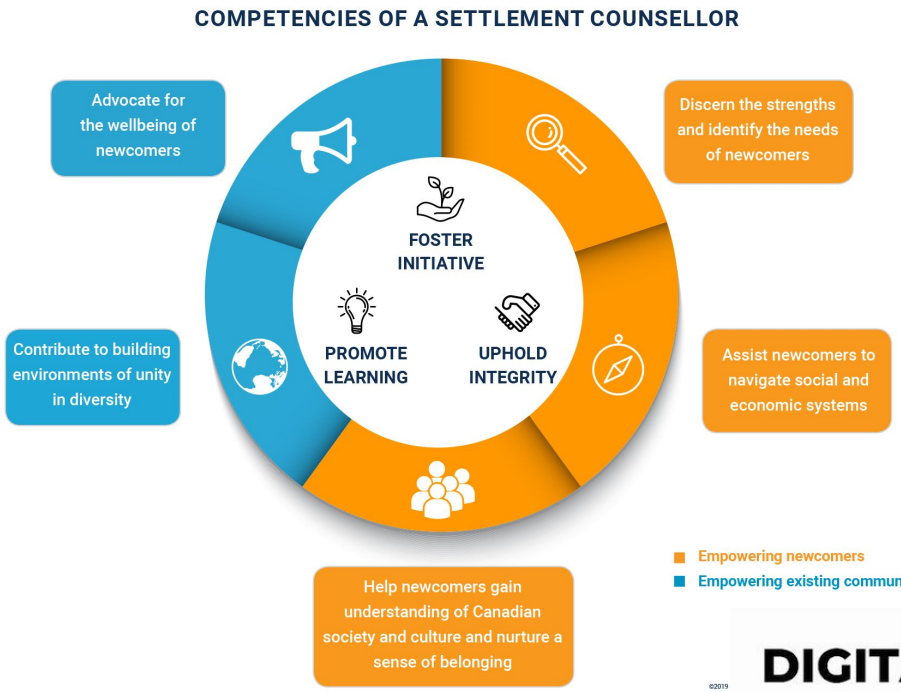
Digital/Data Maturity & Risk Frameworks

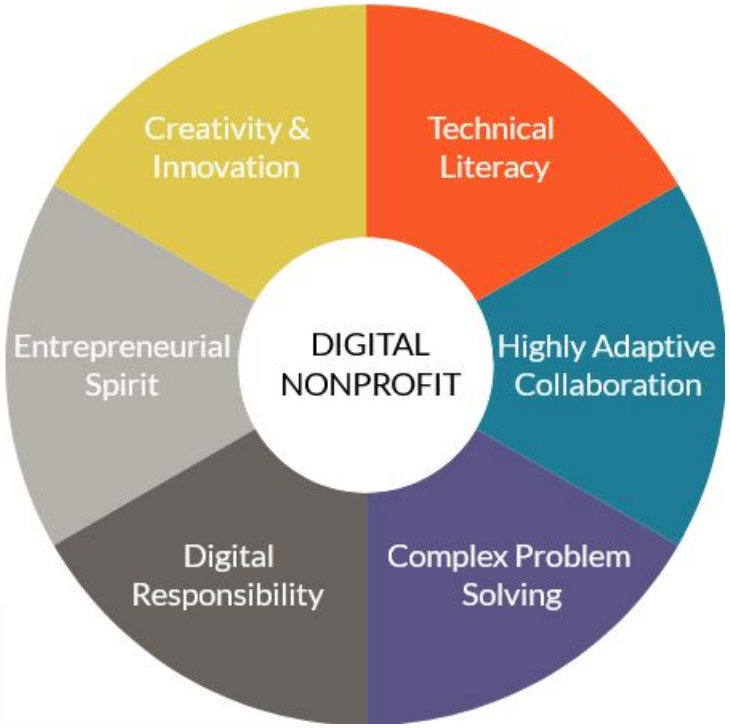
Learn, borrow, customize, implement.

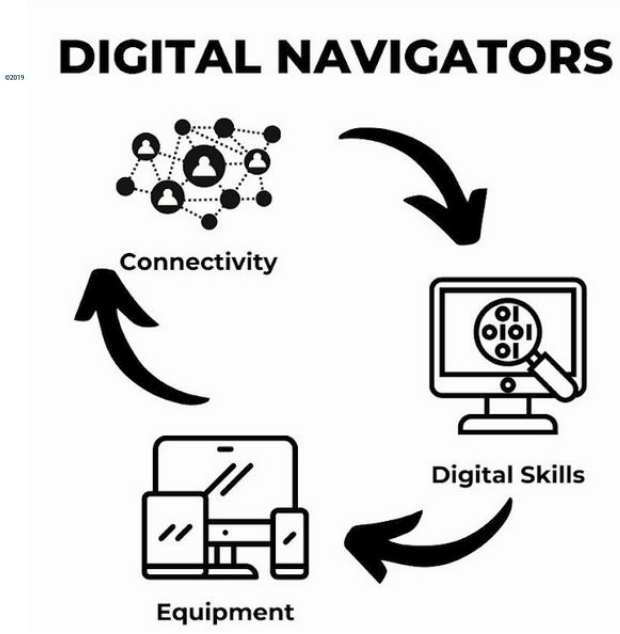
Digital Inclusion & Equity

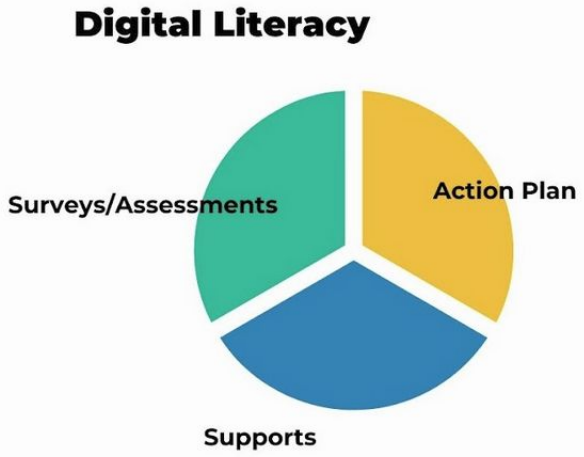
Aligned with sector values of access, anti-oppression, inclusion.

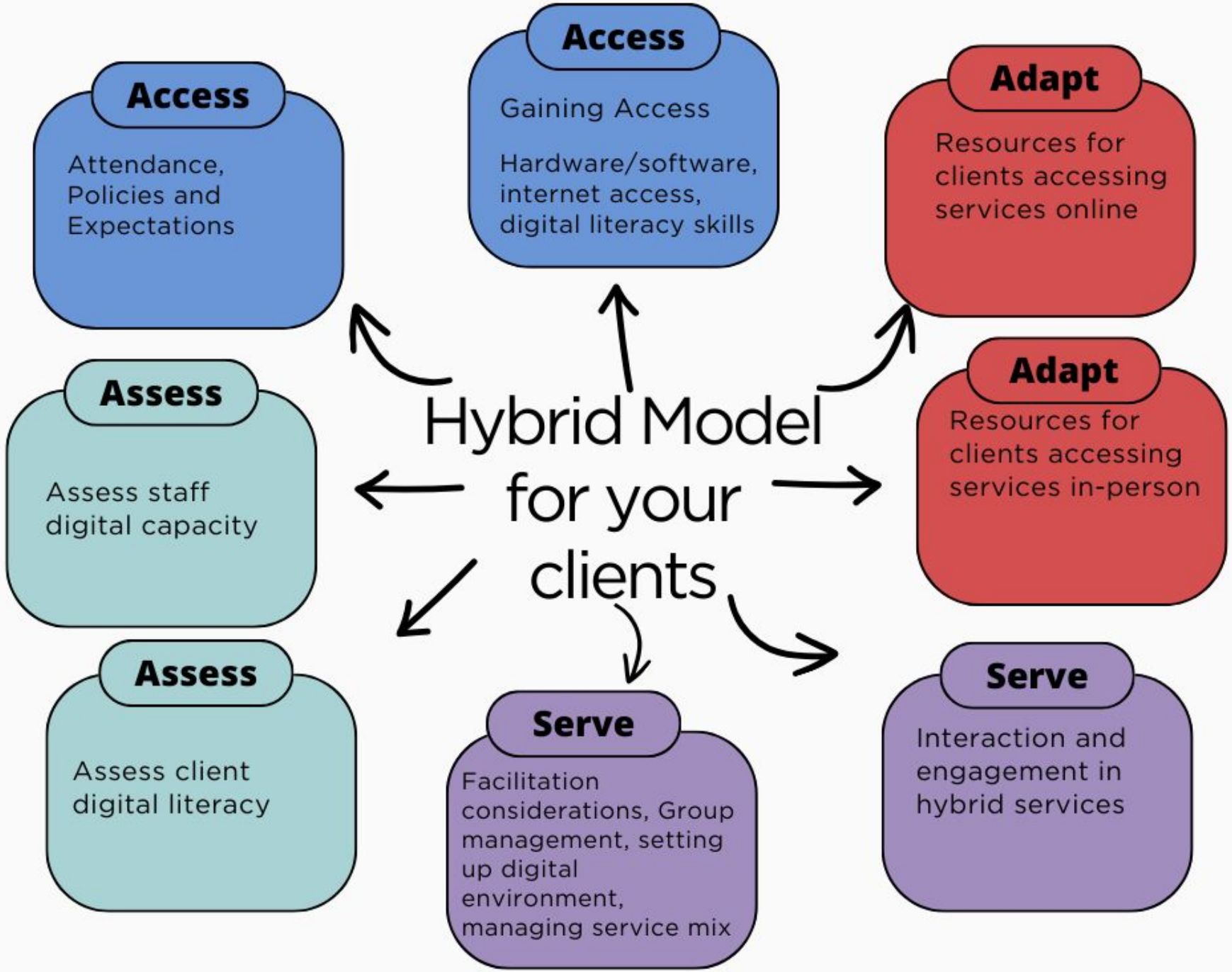
Your digital capacity and new roles










Access
Attendance, Policies and Expectations
Access
Gaining Access
Hardware/software, internet access, digital literacy skills
Adapt
Resources for clients accessing services online
Assess
Assess staff digital capacity
Hybrid Model for your clients
Adapt
Resources for clients accessing services in-person
Assess
Assess client digital literacy
Serve
Facilitation considerations, Group management, setting up digital environment, managing service mix
Serve
Interaction and engagement in hybrid services

Where is this being worked on?

Service	Tech enabled	AI enabled
Language	• Digital Navigator - onboarding & support • Online, Hybrid, and HyFlex language classrooms	• Voice-enabled and text-processing AI tools • Language proficiency assessment through automated testing and scoring systems • Automatic creation of personalized study plans • Automatic learning resource recommendations
I&O	• Support through digital messaging apps • Creating online intake forms • Web-based human-enabled chatbots • Interactive information portals, videos, webinars,	• Automated, personalized information delivery in key areas • AI-driven guides on finding further information and digital skill training
NAARS	• Online needs assessments • Online referral systems with data transfer • CRM and other data processing tools	• Automating routine data processing • Analyzing client information to predict needs • Automatic referral generation based on the needs and assets
Support	• Childcare management software • Online and app-based translation tools • Captioning online videos and other information	• AI-coordinated child care and transportation scheduling • Adaptive technologies for disability support • Automated translation and interpretation systems • Expert-in-the-loop mental health support • Fraud and scam detection
Employment	• Online job finding training modules • Resume and cover letter assistance tools • Labour market assessment and information	• Automated job matching systems • Resume and cover letter assistance tools • Online training modules for skill development • Personalized career advice and planning

Who leads?
Who does what?
It starts with us.