



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Information, Heritage and Seniors Committee
From: Jessica Veldman, Information Services Librarian
Date: Wednesday, February 15, 2023
Subject: Report on the Guelph-Wellington Digital Equity Coalition

Background:

To provide the Library Board with an overview of the Guelph-Wellington Digital Equity Coalition (GWDEC).

GWDEC Overview

The GWDEC was formed in November 2021 in response to the Vital Focus Report released by Towards Common Ground on the secondary effects of the pandemic on the digital divide. The Coalition meets virtually to discuss ongoing projects, opportunities, and individual successes in our organizations and communities. There is a Steering Committee and 3 working groups:

- Advocacy
- Access to Digital Services
- Capacity Building

Our Library joined the Coalition in September 2022, and we participate in the Capacity Building working group. The focus of this group is to leverage the skills and experience that some of our organizations already have in order to help other Coalition members and end-users with less experience. This could include things like providing basic computer literacy training; help with email, government forms, or websites; or navigating online information literacy. This is work that public libraries have been doing for years, so we have valuable experience to share.

Current Opportunities

The current priorities of the GWDEC include the launch of a website so that we can connect with the public and have a central place to share resources and news. One element of this will be a Community Services Matrix that will point people towards the help they need in our communities. Some member organizations are also conducting focus groups or surveys to collect data to help inform the work of the Coalition.

On February 2, 2023, 3 Coalition members, myself included, presented at the Ontario Library Association SuperConference. Our session was titled "Using a Collective Impact Approach to Bridge the Digital Divide" and included a section about our experience in Wellington of providing digital equity resources and programming in a rural environment.

Recommendation:

That the Guelph-Wellington Digital Equity Coalition Report be received for information.
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Veldman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jessica Veldman
Information Services Librarian