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# Digital Navigator 2.0

*Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) was ready to take the learnings from the previous digital navigator design work and do additional prototyping, refining, testing, and iterating in order to ensure that CML customers were receiving technology help that was most relevant and useful for them.*



# THE PROBLEM

[Previous design work](#) conducted in our community revealed ways in which people want to access tech help. As the work progressed, Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) wanted to spend more time going deeper on specific features new programs at CML could include.

# THE APPROACH

Beginning in early 2022, we spent two months focused on using our learnings from previous digital design work to co-create new solutions, test them with community members, and refine them.

We did four rounds of interviews that included more than 20 interviews with seniors, New Americans, and parents.

Interviews were a combination of empathy interviews, and co-creation and feedback sessions to make offerings more useful.

The design team included community members Burhan, Juanita, Samuel, Andrew, Tricia, Jessica, Pamela, and Deoria. Community partners included Chris Cloud, Kristine Cook, Dorcas Taylor Jones, Benjamin Reid, Miya Reyes, and Summer Sherman from Columbus Metropolitan Library. In addition, designers LaToya Jordan and Bre Przestrzelski joined the team, which was led by Heather Tsavaris and supported by Mark Lomax, II from The Columbus Foundation.

# WHAT WE LEARNED

Even though there had been significant learnings about how people wanted and needed to receive tech help prior to this project, the project revealed several additional insights around the specific ways this help could be offered.

We heard from community members how important common language was between those offering and those receiving help. This did not just apply to spoken language (i.e., Spanish speakers sought Spanish speakers to help them; Somali speakers sought Somali speakers, etc.); this also applied to people with common lived experience. Single moms who sought help with technology wanted help from other single moms who may have used technology in the same ways to take care of their children and, importantly, would not offer judgment.

Second, although tech help is important, tech challenges were not necessarily top of mind for the individuals we encountered. Sometimes we would interview individuals who could not think of any tech

problems they had experienced. Tech issues happened in the moment when someone was trying to accomplish a task using tech or devices they did not understand. Once the specific task was complete, interviewees had a hard time remembering what exactly they had needed help with – or even naming the tech challenge they had encountered. Additionally, people we interviewed shared that technology challenges were not the most serious challenges they had in their lives.

Finally, we heard how the lack of tech skills more than two years out from the start of the pandemic was still contributing to significant challenges in many communities. We heard this most clearly from parents whose low tech skills prevented them from offering their children support in school or in keeping them safe online.

We also heard that conditions had to be just right for people to seek tech help. In order to get tech help, people need:

- To feel safe, not judged.
- To be seen, not rushed.
- To feel help is abundant, not scarce.

As a result, we created a checklist that could be applied to any tech help program based on what we learned. It is our belief that if programs are created or assessed with this checklist in mind, they are more likely to be used by residents and offer help in the way residents want and need it.

One prototype that we recommended taking forward was the Family Plan:

- People are not alone in their tech needs; children's needs impact parents' needs and vice versa. This prototype would assess a whole family's needs and provide customized offerings that get each family member the tech help they want and need.

It was important to the design team that implementers adhered to the following principles:

- Keep the tech help offering relevant to people's interests and needs; let them take as much or as little help as they want.
- Having a pre-existing relationship can make people more likely to trust you and ask you for help when they do need it.
- "Common language" between teacher and learner is important.
- Know that tech challenges are not likely to be top of mind for people in their day-to-day life; however when people do need help, they often need it urgently and hardships can occur when they don't get it.
- Technology is a means to an end; it is not an end in itself for people we have heard from.
- Dignity matters; design ways to help people preserve their dignity no matter what.
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- Dignity matters; design ways to help people preserve their dignity no matter what.

## **IMPACT**

These findings were shared with Columbus Metropolitan Library, who continues to use the insights and elements of the prototypes in their digital navigation offerings.

**The Columbus Foundation**  
1234 East Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43205-1453

614/251-4000

[contactus@columbusfoundation.org](mailto:contactus@columbusfoundation.org)

2023