LATINOS & SOCIETY
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Aspen Principles for Latino Digital Success

1 DIGITAL ACCESS **2** DIGITAL SKILLS **3** DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT **4** INVESTMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILIITY

The Principles for Latino Digital Success were conceived as a series of guidelines to inform the design and implementation of effective digital equity efforts targeting the Latino community in the United States.

Executive Summary

Latinos are the youngest cohort of the US population, with a median age of 29.8, almost nine years lower than the median age of 38.5 for the entire US population (USA Facts 2021). The US Department of Labor also estimates that Latinos will represent 78% of net new workers between 2020 and 2030 (Dubina 2021). As a result, it is in the best interest of the US economy to ensure that Latinos can fully benefit from and contribute to the opportunities brought on by current and emerging technologies—either at home, in the workplace, in the classroom, or in applied environments such as health care or financial services.

29.8 years	**17** Million	**78%**
Median age of US Latinos	Latinos 18-35 years in 2021	Estimated net new workers 2020-2030*

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of technologies in every aspect of life. Innovations such as telehealth, remote learning and online education, and e-commerce rapidly expanded as stay-at-home orders forced millions of Americans to rethink their daily activities. At the same time, this increased reliance on online services exacerbated digital inequities. Those who lacked access to high-quality internet services, updated digital devices, or relevant digital skills were less equipped to benefit from the new opportunities.

In recognition of the digital divide's effects on social equity and economic opportunity, Congress approved a series of once-in-a-lifetime investments to bridge the gap and ensure every American can fully participate in the digital economy. Importantly, these investments incorporated significant resources that can be leveraged to cultivate human capital in the form of enhanced digital and work force skills programs. However, as these resources move to the state level where programs are established and dollars are distributed, policymakers need to recognize the eligible uses of these funds and the massive opportunity in front of them to impact our current and future workforce.

Our generation is responsible for maximizing the impact of these Federal investments. We have a unique chance to build the foundations of a better society with equal opportunities for everyone to succeed and thrive and for the US economy to remain at the forefront of global innovation. However, no one-size-fits-all solution will effectively bridge the gap for the different communities that call the US their home. Our goal with these Principles for Latino Digital Success is to contribute to the conversation on what digital equity from a Latino perspective looks like and what kind of nuanced approaches are required to maximize outcomes for Latino communities across the country.[1]

Target audience

These principles were developed primarily with Latino individuals aged 18 to 35 years old in mind. As of 2021, they were almost 17 million strong and represented over 26% of the Latino community in the US.

Although all age groups are equally deserving of support to succeed in the digital age, the segment of those aged 18 to 35 years old is particularly well suited to support younger and older members of their communities and networks. Many are parents or siblings of young children who need support at home to maximize their educational outcomes. In many cases, young adults are also caretakers of the family's senior members and can support the digital access and upskilling of older adults.

In the workplace, young adults represent entry-level to midcareer workers whose access to digital opportunity can significantly shape their career and professional development in the years to come, thus supporting wealth creation for their families and enhancing competitiveness and growth for their employers. High-quality jobs in high-growth sectors also represent a stepping stone for many opportunity entrepreneurs, who learn the skills and the rules of a given market and then move on to start their own businesses, with increased chances of succeeding and scaling up.

[1]*This document uses key terms such as "digital divide" and "digital equity" in alignment with the definitions by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.*

These principles compile the main takeaways from the Aspen Latino Digital Success Task Force workshop meeting held in Miami, Florida, on Jan. 30, 2023. The Task Force is a brain trust of leaders from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors joining efforts to further greater public awareness of the current challenges that hamper Latino workers', businesses', and entrepreneurs' digital opportunities. We would like to thank Task Force cochairs Amanda Renteria, Hector Mujica, Juan Otero, and Task Force members for their contributions and input. Please see Page 11 for a list of Task Force members.

1 Digital Access

The basic infrastructure for Latino Digital Success consists of affordability, access, and adoption of high-quality internet services and updated digital devices.

Actionable guidelines

For providers of internet services and digital devices:

- High-quality internet services mean that consistent high download and upload speeds are available and affordable to residences, businesses, and central hubs (libraries, schools, etc.) in every neighborhood.
- Internet service providers, device manufacturers, and retailers provide customer support and troubleshooting, using effective communication and language assistance to accommodate cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Latino users have access to information on different types of technologies and services and sufficient options to choose the internet services and devices that best adjust to their needs and expectations.

For policymakers:

- Data sovereignty requirements are critical to safeguarding consumers' data rights.
- Whenever possible, burdensome requirements on the subscriber are kept at a minimum, especially for programs focused on affordability. Requirements for enrollment, such as a government-issued ID or credit card, may exclude a large share of eligible households.

For nonprofits and educational institutions:

- Organizations distributing devices or enrolling eligible households in affordable internet services are trusted, culturally competent community providers that bridge the digital gap to ensure affordability, access, and adoption. A thorough understanding of the community being served is essential.
- Latino users understand their rights as consumers of internet services and digital devices and can exercise their choice to opt out.
- Awareness of online safety and cybersecurity is critical to any strategy focused on access to internet services and devices.

Guiding Questions

- What does high-quality, high-speed internet look like in the local context?
- Can these services meet the needs of an entire household, or are the policies narrowly drawn to favor products that support only one individual?
- How do we remove barriers to access and adoption of the internet and devices?
- What languages other than English are spoken in the local community? Are troubleshooting and technical support available in those languages?
- What other features beyond language are critical to ensure internet accessibility in the local Latino community?
- What strategies may increase the Latino community's participation in digital access efforts? How can programs such as the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program improve their outreach to eligible Latino households?
- Whenever possible, are eligibility and enrollment requirements for the user kept at a minimum?
- What education efforts would be most relevant to ensure Latino users understand their options when shopping for internet services and devices?
- Are any mechanisms in place to get feedback on needs and expectations from the community?

Principle in Practice

Chicago Connected

Chicago Connected is a model public–private partnership program between the City of Chicago, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the philanthropic community, and community organizations that expands access to high-speed internet service for CPS students and their entire household by covering the monthly cost of services. At the onset of the pandemic, Kids First Chicago, a local nonprofit organization working to improve education for Chicago's children by ensuring their families are respected authorities and decision makers in their children's education, conducted a phone survey of hundreds of CPS parents to understand the best way to support them through the pandemic. It soon became evident that internet accessibility and affordability were a top concern for many, with an estimated 1 in 5 families within the CPS system not having access to adequate digital resources for remote learning; Black and Brown communities were disproportionately affected. In June 2020, Chicago Connected was launched as a community-centered response to those challenges.

To align the program to the needs of all 77 Chicago neighborhoods, the initiative established a citywide network of 35 community-based organizations to conduct outreach, including Hispanic-serving organizations such as Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council and Latinos Progresando. In addition to supporting access to high-speed internet services, the CPS system distributed over 200,000 devices to high-need students to enable learning, and partner community-based organizations provided digital literacy training to families. Because of its comprehensive approach and public–private partnership structure, Chicago Connected soon became a role model for similar programs around the country. Over time, the program was made available to more than 228,000 eligible students and their families, and over 40,000 households are currently enrolled. As a result of the initiative, the connectivity gap among CPS families was reduced to 1 in 10 lacking access (Kids First Chicago 2022). Chicago Connected has also expanded to provide no-cost internet to eligible students enrolled in Chicago City Colleges.

DID YOU KNOW?

Households with a Broadband Subscription

82.3%
of Latino households

VS

85.1%
US average household
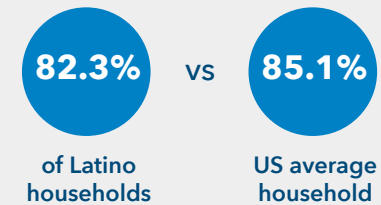
- According to data from the 2018 American Community Survey, 82.3% of Latino households had a broadband subscription, compared to a US average of 85.1%. The difference equates to almost half a million Latino households. Regarding access to digital devices, 67.9% of Latino households had a desktop computer or laptop, whereas the US average was 77.5% (Martin 2021, 5). Similarly, this translates to a difference of over 1.5 million Latino households.

- A 2021 National League of Cities report with data from the American Community Survey identified that affordability is one of the main reasons Latinos give for not going online. Although 25% percent of Latinos cite this as a reason, the percentage for the entire US population decreases to 19% (Geraghty et al. 2021, 6).

- A 2022 report by the Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness, University of Texas at El Paso, identified that every $1 invested in El Paso's broadband infrastructure would add $2 to the region's economic output (Hunt Institute 2022, 91).

2 | Digital Skills

Digital skills-building opportunities are responsive to Latino participants' expertise and potential while providing the support they need to succeed.

Actionable guidelines

- Latinos have access to information on the increasing importance of digital skills in our economy and society and understand the associated benefits in terms of enhanced income and access to new opportunities.

- Participants are assessed before and after training to ensure that the training is in line with their needs and potential, learning goals are met, and they gain access to high-quality jobs as a result.

- Programs and assessment tools are available in languages other than English or are integrated with English for Speakers of Other Languages programming when relevant.

- Program development prioritizes cultural competence and lived experiences in addition to language.

- One-on-one support and a helpdesk are available throughout the process, using effective communication and language assistance to accommodate cultural and linguistic diversity.

- Programming includes connections to wraparound services such as child care and transportation to maximize participation.

- Programming is offered outside of working hours to facilitate participation.

- Existing educational and workforce development programs fully integrate digital skills development.

- Programming goes beyond technical skills and includes the acquisition and use of social capital.

- Curricula range from foundational to advanced digital skills most in demand in the local labor market.

- Programming focuses not just on current hiring needs but also on emerging trends.

- On-the-job training models, where the trainee gets paid while developing skills, are preferred, including apprenticeships and paid internships.

Guiding Questions

- What is the level of awareness among local Latino workers and business owners of the increasing importance of digital skills in our economy?

- What educational efforts could be implemented to enhance said awareness?

- What digital skills and workforce development programs are already available locally? What could be done to maximize their outreach and impact? What additional resources or programs would be most needed?

- What can be done to support Latino workers at risk of job displacement due to automation?

- What opportunities exist for local employers to develop on-the-job training models? What support from the government, educational institutions, or training providers would be needed for them to succeed?

Principle in practice

Goodwill Digital Career Accelerator

The Digital Career Accelerator was launched by Goodwill Industries in 2017 to improve access to digital skills training for local communities across the US and to connect them with high-quality jobs that do not require degrees. The initiative received funding from corporate partners, including Accenture, Caterpillar Foundation, Comcast Internet Essentials, Google.org, Meta Elevate, and Microsoft Philanthropies. According to Goodwill Industries 2021 Annual Report, over 1.2 million people gained digital awareness and new digital skills, and 315,000 previously overlooked job seekers were placed in digital economy jobs as a result of the initiative.

PerScholas Tech Career Training

PerScholas is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance economic equity through rigorous training for tech careers and to connect skilled talent to leading businesses. Through a network of 22 centers nationwide, Per Scholas provides a wide range of in-person and virtual technical computer training, including IT support, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and software engineering. All their programs are tuition free and allow students to gain technical training, industry certifications, and diverse professional growth opportunities. In addition to the training programming, students are offered learner support resources such as financial coaching and case management. Per Scholas alums receive professional development and upskilling support for two years after graduation. As a result of this holistic approach, more than 80% of their graduates find jobs within one year of completing the program, with an average posttraining income of $56,000.

DID YOU KNOW?

- A 2023 report by the National Skills Coalition identified that 92% of jobs require digital skills (Bergson-Shilcock et al. 2023, 4) and yet the National Skills Coalition also reported in 2020 that 57% of Latinos aged 16 to 64 had little to no digital skills, compared to a US average of 31%.

- According to a 2019 report by McKinsey Global Institute, the job displacement rate due to automation and digitalization in the workplace among Latino workers was 25.5%, compared with 23% for the average US worker (Lund et al. 2019, 13).

- Fifty-five percent of Latino workers are skilled through alternative routes (STARs) such as in community colleges, apprenticeships, and on-the-job learning. Latino STARs are overrepresented in lower-wage jobs, earning a median wage of $16.80 per hour, 10% below non-Hispanic STARs (Opportunity@Work 2022).

- The perception is often that younger people are comfortable with technology and have the skills to match, but the reality is that individuals may not be able to operate specific technologies used in the workplace. These workers deserve opportunities and support to build on the skills they do have, such as creating social media content or gaming, so that these skills can be used in the workplace, such as when navigating software-controlled manufacturing equipment, using point-of-sale systems in retail environments, or working with electronic medical records.

3 | Digital Empowerment

Employers' workforce and leadership reflect the full diversity of the Latino communities they serve, and they consequently develop products and services in line with the needs of these communities.

Actionable guidelines

For employers:

- Partnerships with Hispanic Serving Institutions and talent developers are established to enhance diverse Latino representation in the workforce.
- Skills-based rather than degree-based hiring practices are adopted. Bachelor's degrees are not required by default. Instead, Human Resources departments assess the skills required for the role.

- The corporate culture welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds. Affinity groups are encouraged and provided adequate funding to implement activities that promote belonging.
- Employers commit to equal pay principles. Similar responsibilities equate to similar pay, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, or country of origin, among other aspects.
- Mentoring, tutoring, and championing are available to diverse workers in languages other than English if needed.
- Products, services, and business models align with communities' needs and expectations. Protections are in place to eliminate harm to communities.

Guiding Questions

- What are the primary sources of talent for local employers? What can be done to connect with new sources and attract diverse talent?
- What resources or tools can be developed to support hiring teams that adopt skills-based hiring practices? How can skills development and ongoing on-the-job training be supported?
- How can entrepreneurs and small businesses tap into public workforce programs?
- What strategies are employers implementing to support the career advancement of diverse workers?
- Are affinity groups active, adequately equipped, and funded to support diverse workers?
- Before launching new services or products, does a diverse pool of end users test them to identify and eliminate potential biases?

Principle in practice

Code for America: GetCalFresh

GetCalFresh is a digital assister created by Code for America with the goal of facilitating enrollment of eligible households into CalFresh, California's Food Assistance Program. People with a primary language other than English face additional barriers to access programs and services. For instance, 42% of Spanish speakers, 74% of Cantonese speakers, and 84% of Mandarin speakers who were eligible for CalFresh were not enrolled. As a result, GetCalFresh was made available in English, Spanish, and traditional Chinese, with texting services and customer support in English, Spanish, and both simplified and traditional Chinese.

However, when analyzing the usage data from the fall of 2021, the Code for America team found that despite the availability of Spanish and Chinese application options, approximately 40% of Spanish-speaking clients, 56% of Mandarin-speaking clients, and 68% of Cantonese-speaking clients were applying in English, even if it was not their preferred language. To improve their understanding of how users were engaging with the tool, and what additional barriers could be addressed to facilitate adoption, Code for America launched a multilingual research project led by native speakers (Carrillo et al 2021).This approach led to enhanced trust from the language communities in the research process, as researchers carry cultural and linguistic sensitivities that can improve the connection with clients. Accounting for the nuances in different written and spoken formats of a language can help improve the client experience and ultimately enhance trust and adoption by the community. Cultural competence leads to improved outcomes in the provision of services; this applies to public, private, and nonprofit organizations. Similarly, the lived experience of end users is a key input in Code for America's human-centered design approach for developing resources or tools for specific populations (Sauceda 2021). Their conviction is that involving the people who face the problem will lead to a more solid solution—that is, there is greater power in building with, rather than for, the community.

Since GetCalFresh was launched, it has been progressively improved using feedback from the community it serves. In its first iterations, it required access to a desktop computer, and it took more than an hour to complete the application. Now CalFresh applications can be submitted with a smartphone in less than 10 minutes, which dramatically reduces barriers for thousands of eligible applicants. All 58 counties in California use GetCalFresh, and the tool assists over 25,000 applications every week.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Despite being almost 1 in 5 workers in the US, Latinos represented just 7% of workers in tech occupations, 4% of tech leadership, and merely 2% of tech board members in 2021 (Deleersnyder et al. 2021, 2).

- However, a linear relationship exists between racial and ethnic diversity and better financial performance in US companies: for every 10% increase in racial and ethnic diversity on the senior executive team, earnings before interest and taxes rise 0.8%, according to a 2015 McKinsey report (Hunt et al. 2015, 6).

- The wage gap for Latinos is as high as $288 billion per year. In a parity scenario, wages for Latino workers could be more than 35% higher, and an additional 1.1 million Latinos could join the middle class (Perez et al. 2021, 1).

- More than 3 out of 4 (76%) Latinos expend energy repressing parts of their personas in the workplace, according to a 2016 report by the Center for Talent Innovation (Allwood et al. 2016, 8).

- Latinos with sponsors are 42% more likely to be satisfied with their career progression than Latinos without sponsors. Yet, high-earning Latino employees in large companies are less likely than their white counterparts to have sponsors (5% vs. 13%) (Allwood et al. 2016, 27).

4 | Investments for Sustainability

Sufficient investments across the capital continuum are secured to support digital equity efforts in the long run, and impact is measured to prioritize the most effective approaches.

Actionable guidelines

- Current investments spearheaded by government and philanthropy are sustained and enhanced over time through complementary funding sources across the capital continuum, such as retirement funds, university endowments, and blended and innovative financing vehicles.

- State- and local-level digital equity plans are codesigned with Latino communities, with funding for culturally competent initiatives explicitly included.

- Investments prioritize local capacity building to enhance long-term sustainability, including institutional development and infrastructure and technology equipment deployment.

- Standard reporting for transparency of digital equity funding is adopted. Key performance indicators and impact metrics are embedded into the funding strategies to maximize return on investments for the communities.

- Education on the benefits of digitizing operations is promoted among diverse small business owners.

Guiding Questions

- Is a strategy in place to sustain federally funded digital equity efforts in the long run beyond currently available funding opportunities?

- Are Latino institutions and community-based organizations sufficiently involved in the digital equity planning process?

- Is there sufficient buy-in from critical stakeholders in the local community to successfully implement the strategy?

- Do local stakeholders have sufficient capabilities to implement the initiatives successfully?

- Is an impact measurement strategy embedded in the design and implementation of digital equity efforts?

- Are any strategies in place for the program's target audience to understand the usefulness or necessity of the supports?

8

Principle in practice

Closing the Digital Divide with CSUDH-WIN

In December 2022, the Workforce Integration Network (WIN) of California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), a Hispanic Serving Institution, was awarded $5.3 million through the NTIA Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program to support digital equity efforts in the community. CSUDH's winning proposal takes a holistic approach to close the digital divide by providing resources to students, staff, faculty, and community members in different stages of the digital inclusion journey, including broadband connectivity, device access, education, workforce development, and high-quality job placement. One of the initiative's pillars consists of training and funding for CSUDH students to become digital navigators in their community, thus building a bridge between job placement and social impact through paid internships in community organizations. Students become agents for change, which supports the digital empowerment of community members with a culturally competent approach. The initiative also addresses the capacity building of community partner organizations by distributing equipment and providing technical support and training. Finally, the proposal included an impact measurement framework that will allow CSUDH to identify improvement opportunities for the strategy.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In 2021, Congress passed the Digital Equity Act, which allocates $2.75 billion to digital equity programs administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Sixty million dollars have already been allocated to US states and territories to design their digital equity plans, which will determine the allocation of $1.44 billion in funding from the NTIA. Finally, NTIA will directly administer $1.25 billion through competitive grants, which are expected to launch in 2024.

- The NTIA also administers the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, which provides $42.45 billion to expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs in states and territories.

- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 appropriated $14.2 billion for the Affordable Connectivity Program. Administered by the Federal Communications Commission, the program provides qualifying low-income households discounts on broadband service and connected devices.

Principle in practice (continued)

Google Career Certificates Fund

Launched in February 2022, the $100 million Google Career Certificates Fund supports an innovative investment program that aims to empower more than 20,000 learners to realize over $1 billion in aggregate wage gains over the next decade. Managed by nonprofit Social Finance and supported by inaugural training providers Merit America and Year Up, the program equips people from underserved communities with job-ready skills in fields like data analytics, IT support, project management, and UX design within three to six months—with no degree or experience required. Participants learn new skills and earn Google Career Certificates—industry-recognized credentials that allow them to access well-paying, high-growth jobs. Participants enroll with one of the partner training providers at no upfront cost and repay program costs via no-interest, low monthly payments if they secure jobs making at least $40,000 annually, thus enhancing the sustainability of the efforts. Additionally, learners receive career and professional development services that may include resume review, coaching, interview prep, and job placement support. They also receive wraparound supports to address real-life challenges that may arise during training, such as emergency aid funds, transportation, and child care cost support.

Tech Equity Miami

Miami recently joined the ranks of tech hubs such as Silicon Valley and Austin, and many community organizations have raised concerns about who reaps the benefits from this economic boom. To reduce adverse effects such as gentrification and displacement of lower-income residents, it is critical to ensure that local communities can access job and business opportunities in this nascent industry. Tech Equity Miami is a funding consortium that aims to deploy $100 million in philanthropic funding over five years into initiatives that remove entry barriers into the tech industry and that will create opportunities for underrepresented groups, including youth and small businesses. To measure community impact, all projects that receive a Tech Equity Miami designation will contribute information and statistics to a public database that tracks progress toward the initiative's outcomes and impact goals.

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