



# Partnership for Increasing Digital Literacy in Marshall County

## » Executive Summary «

### Key Highlights

**Issue:** The digital divide is expanding, particularly among low-income and aging populations. Teaching digital literacy basics, cybersecurity, and online safety to these groups, as well as the business community, is imperative.

**Resolution:** The Marysville Public Library, in collaboration with partners Blue Valley Technologies and Marysville Chamber Main Street, suggests acquiring twelve laptops and organizing classes. These sessions will focus on digital literacy, cybersecurity, and online safety, aiming to enhance the business community's proficiency in online marketing skills.

The Marysville Public Library, in collaboration with community partners Blue Valley Technologies (BVT) and the Marysville Chamber & Main Street (C&MS), is dedicated to enhancing digital literacy in the Marysville and Marshall County area. Through the acquisition of twelve laptops and the hiring of a part-time trainer, manpower support from our local broadband provider, and hosting a residency for our business sector, our goal is to offer classes to the public that **strengthen computer proficiency, reinforce online safety awareness, and augment the online marketing skills of the Marysville business community.**

The challenges of the digital literacy gap are particularly pronounced among low-income and aging populations in Marysville and Marshall County, Kansas. As the world increasingly transitions to an online-only paradigm, the Library has partnered with BVT to address this gap and deliver a tailored curriculum to these populations. In collaboration with C&MS, the business community will also benefit from the classes, with a focus on cybersecurity and online safety to ensure everyone remains secure and vigilant online.



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The Library, as a public institution, is well-positioned to conduct these classes, maintaining an inclusive approach that welcomes individuals of all ages and economic backgrounds. Serving as a crucial pillar of democracy, the Marysville Public Library is committed to providing an environment where community members can easily access resources fulfilling their cultural, educational, and recreational needs. On average each year, we welcome over 16,300 patrons, with nearly 3,200 individuals utilizing the public access computers. Additionally, our wireless connection serves more than 15,300 users annually. The public access computers experience high demand during after-school hours on almost every weekday.

Our partners will actively enhance the program and enthusiastically promote awareness of these classes. BVT, as the primary broadband provider in the area, possesses expertise in online safety and cybersecurity. By incorporating BVT staff members, we aim to deliver classes emphasizing the crucial nature of these topics in the expanding digital landscape. Establishing a connection between the business world and these vital subjects is crucial to ensuring the continued prosperity of Marysville's economy. Therefore, C&MS plays a pivotal role in capturing the attention of both small and large businesses in Marysville. Our approach involves engaging with them individually and through organized classes.



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## Description of the Location, Partners Involved, and Anticipated Improvements

### 1. Location

- a. Locations in Marysville, Kansas
  - i. Marysville Public Library—Marysville, Kansas
- ii. Locations in Marshall County, Kansas
  1. Frankfort City Library—Frankfort, Kansas
  2. Blue Rapids Public Library—Blue Rapids, Kansas
  3. Waterville Public Library—Waterville, Kansas
  4. Axtell Public Library—Axtell, Kansas
  5. Beattie Public Library—Beattie, Kansas
  6. Vermillion Public Library—Vermillion, Kansas

### 2. Partners Involved

- a. Marysville Public Library
  - i. Marysville Public Library is a public library established with a supporting tax levy in 1941. The Library is a hub of Marysville, providing classes, items to check out, and more.
- b. Marysville Chamber & Main Street
  - i. A combined organization of the local Chamber of Commerce and the Main Street program - an affiliate of Kansas Main Street and Main Street America. The organization works to strengthen the local economy, promote businesses and foster collaborations between businesses and the community.
- c. Blue Valley Technologies
  - i. Blue Valley Technologies is governed by a board of directors elected by their patrons. They are a full-service broadband service provider that provides access to everything you need to keep your home or business connected.

### 3. Anticipated Improvements

- a. Expected advancements in low-income populations, aging communities, and the Marysville business sector comprise:
  - i. Strengthening computer proficiency
  - ii. Reinforcing understanding of online safety
  - iii. Augmenting digital skills for online marketing



# Partnership for Increasing Digital Literacy in Marshall County

## Goals of This Project

### 1. Strengthening computer proficiency

a. The first goal of this project is to enhance computer skills within the Marysville community and Marshall County by employing a part-time instructor. The instructor will conduct classes covering fundamental aspects such as internet navigation, word processing, Google apps, email creation, and social media. The grant spans two years, during which twelve classes will be conducted in Marysville. Additionally, classes will be held quarterly in the six public libraries across Marshall County. The initiative also involves the purchase of twelve laptops to provide in-depth training on the specified topics.

### 2. Reinforcing understanding of online safety

a. The second goal of this project is to promote awareness regarding online safety and provide education on protecting oneself and businesses from potential online threats and hackers. Blue Valley Technologies staff will be engaged in conducting classes that delve into advanced topics, covering online safety, privacy, and cybersecurity fundamentals for consumers and small businesses. The grant spans two years, with eight planned classes in Marysville. Two sessions a year will also be held in four other public libraries across Marshall County. The twelve laptops will be utilized for these classes as well.

### 3. Augmenting digital skills for online marketing

a. The third goal of this project is to improve proficiency in digital skills for online marketing. Brian Ostrosvsky from Locable would be brought in for a three-week residency in Marysville. The acquired laptops could then be employed for personalized business consultations, with a specific focus on assisting local business owners in establishing an online presence, including the development of a website and active engagement on social media platforms, to broaden their audience and attract customers. Furthermore, he would concentrate on enhancing the digital literacy skills of local business owners to effectively manage and analyze data. Another goal would be to guide business owners in understanding the process of collecting, interpreting, and utilizing data to gain insights into customer behaviors, market trends, and overall business performance. Lastly, equipping small business owners with the necessary knowledge and tools to adapt to changes, embrace new technologies, and stay ahead in the dynamic and constantly evolving business landscape would finalize this goal.

**This project would be presented in an economically-distressed area.**





# Partnership for Increasing Digital Literacy in Marshall County

## Short- and Long-Term Benefit to the Community

### **Strengthening computer proficiency**

The digital realm is continually growing. Providing a boost to the entire community, particularly low-income and aging populations, will aid in readiness for forthcoming internet developments. This includes improving job skills, facilitating connections with loved ones, and supporting ongoing education for various purposes.

Immediate advantages may encompass securing employment, fostering connections with loved ones through social media, and acquiring new knowledge. Over the long term, benefits include job retention, cultivating deeper relationships with friends and family, and personal growth.

### **Reinforcing understanding of online safety**

It is crucial to underscore the significance of reinforcing understanding of online safety, particularly within low-income and aging populations, as well as the business community engaged in online marketing.

For low-income individuals, access to digital resources may be limited, and there may be a lack of awareness regarding potential online risks. Empowering this demographic with a strong understanding of online safety ensures that they can navigate the digital landscape securely, protecting their personal information and financial well-being.

Aging populations, often less familiar with rapidly evolving digital technologies, can be susceptible to online threats. Reinforcing their understanding of online safety not only protects them from scams and identity theft but also enables them to harness the benefits of the digital world, such as accessing online services and connecting with loved ones.

In the context of the business community involved in online marketing, where the stakes are high, a robust understanding of online safety is paramount. Businesses deal with sensitive customer data and financial transactions, making them attractive targets for cyber threats. Reinforcing online safety practices among businesses helps safeguard customer trust, prevent data breaches, and uphold the integrity of online transactions.



# Partnership for Increasing Digital Literacy in Marshall County

## Short- and Long-Term Benefit to the Community

### **Augmenting digital skills for online marketing**

By attracting online customers, local businesses can increase their sales and revenue, contributing to our local economy.

Job creation may occur as the business expands and requires additional staff to manage the online operations.

When businesses have an active social media presence, it provides a place for them to engage with the local community and build relationships with customers. This helps develop the sense of community.

Having an online presence with an e-commerce option allows customers to shop at any time which leads to increased sales for the business as well as allows customers to shop locally easier.

By having an online presence, local businesses can help promote local events.

By having an online presence, local businesses can use the platform to educate the community about their products or services, industry trends and relevant information - this enhances the overall knowledge of the community.

Local businesses can use their online platforms to support local nonprofits and community causes.

Since websites and social media platforms can be designed with accessibility features, this makes it easier for local businesses to engage with everyone.



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## Community Engagement Strategies

### 1. Plans to raise awareness of the program

#### a. Social media

##### i. Facebook

1. Utilizing the pages of the Marysville Public Library, Marysville Chamber & Main Street, Blue Valley Technologies, Frankfort City Library, Waterville Public Library and the Blue Rapids Public Library.

##### ii. Instagram

1. Utilizing the pages of the Marysville Public Library, Marysville Chamber & Main Street, and Blue Valley Technologies.

#### b. Local newspapers

- i. Running stories and ads in The Marysville Advocate and the Frankfort Area News.

#### c. Local radio stations

- i. Submitting stories and doing interviews with KNDY of Marysville and KCLY of Clay Center.

#### d. Newsletters

- i. Utilizing the emailed and printed newsletters of the Marysville Public Library.

- ii. Utilizing the printed newsletters of RSVP.

- iii. Utilizing the emailed newsletters of Blue Valley Technologies.

#### e. Community calendars

- i. Utilizing the community calendars from Marysville Chamber & Main Street, the Marysville Advocate, and Visit Marysville website.

#### f. Posters

- i. Utilized throughout partnering communities.

#### g. Word of Mouth

- i. Recurring Participants



# Partnership for Increasing Digital Literacy in Marshall County

## Summary of the Marysville Public Library

### 1. Summary of the Marysville Public Library

- a. In 1941, a tax levy was implemented to provide financial support to the Marysville Public Library. The library building, constructed in 1995, underwent a comprehensive internal renovation in 2014.
- b. The mission of the Marysville Public Library is to create and maintain an environment in which the members of our community can comfortably and easily access resources which fill their cultural, educational, and recreational needs.
- c. The primary objectives of the Marysville Public Library include prioritizing privacy and integrity for both patrons and staff, ensuring access to a diverse range of information, emphasizing sustainability and preservation through innovative approaches, fostering respect and compassion among patrons and staff, and maintaining a strong focus on education and public service.