

Digital Equity
Coalition Aotearoa

DECA Letters to the Ministers:

April 2024



Contents

Letter to Minister Bayly.....	3
Letter to Minister Collins.....	7
Letter to Minister Costello.....	11
Letter to Minister Dr Reti.....	15
Letter to Minister Lee.....	19
Letter to Minister Potaka.....	23
Letter to Minister Simmonds.....	27
Letter to Minister Stanford.....	32
Letter to Minister Upston.....	36
Letter to Minister Willis.....	40

2 April 2024

Hon Andrew Bayly
Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
Minister for Small Business and Manufacturing
Minister of Statistics
A.Bayly@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have a greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way <i>(Source: Department of Internal Affairs)</i>
130 000 households	Without internet access <i>(Source: Census)</i>
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 <i>(Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)</i>
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely <i>(Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)</i>

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity matters for your Commerce and Consumer Affairs and Small Business portfolios. It's also relevant for the Statistics portfolio, as we need surveys and statistics to understand levels of digital inclusion across the population.

On the **consumer affairs** side, digital skills and internet access provide many benefits to consumers. They can save money by shopping online, which is especially important during a cost of living crisis. Digital access also enables consumers to manage their banking and finances online. It is becoming increasingly difficult to do a number of payment transactions without online banking, which puts great stress on those without digital skills, devices or internet access. With all this online consumer activity, digital skills are essential to ensure that New Zealanders stay safe online and do not become victims of increasingly sophisticated online scams.

Digital equity is also essential for New Zealand **small businesses** who rely on consumers having internet access and devices to be able to shop online, and on New Zealanders having the digital skills they need to operate and grow their businesses. This is also an issue that the Digital Boost Alliance has on its radar and is keen to work with you to address.

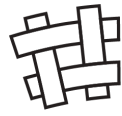
What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.



Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā

Victoria MacLennan

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

Kris Dempster Rivett

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

2 April 2024

Hon Judith Collins

Minister of Science

Minister of Innovation and Technology

Minister for Digitising Government

J.Collins@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

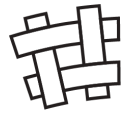
Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way <i>(Source: Department of Internal Affairs)</i>
130 000 households	Without internet access <i>(Source: Census)</i>
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 <i>(Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)</i>
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely <i>(Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)</i>

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.



Why this matters for your portfolio

Science Innovation and Technology

Digital equity is a critical enabler for your Science, Innovation and Technology portfolio. Government investment will help produce the essential pipeline of digitally skilled people the New Zealand tech sector and other tech enabled sectors are seeking. Without access to the digital basics - internet, devices and foundational digital skills - it will not be possible to increase the number of highly digitally skilled New Zealanders. This in turn has flow on effects for economic growth, by bringing increased employment, innovation and productivity improvements for businesses.

Digital government

Digital equity goes hand in hand with your role as the Minister for Digitising Government. Online government services have lots of advantages, such as saving the Government money (less staff costs and bricks and mortar), the potential to reach many more people, more integrated services, and data driven insights. But with this comes a need to ensure that New Zealanders have the digital skills and internet access they need to access those services. Digitisation of government services and closure of face to face services (and reduced access to call centres) is a really big part of the demand on digital equity community services that are not funded by government.

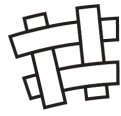
With this mix of portfolios we think you can play a key role in leading a ministerial discussion about digital equity.

What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.



Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā

Victoria MacLennan

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

Kris Dempster Rivett

2 April 2024

Hon Casey Costello

Minister for Seniors

C.Costello@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way <i>(Source: Department of Internal Affairs)</i>
130 000 households	Without internet access <i>(Source: Census)</i>
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 <i>(Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)</i>
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely <i>(Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)</i>

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity is an important issue for your Seniors Portfolio. As the world becomes increasingly digital, many seniors are struggling to participate, access essential services (e.g. government, shopping and banking) that are moving online, and maintain social connection.

[NZIER analysis](#) of Census data shows that older people are much more likely to be without internet at home. For example, 36 percent of people aged 86-90 do not have internet access. The [BNZ digital skills survey](#) found that 50 percent of people aged 70 to 79 lack essential digital skills. The figure rises to 79 percent for the 80 plus age group.

Digital equity issues compound for seniors because they are more likely to have health and disability issues. Digital skills, devices and internet access can help people with disabilities overcome physical and sensory barriers to full participation in society. Being online can also facilitate greater access to health services.

The Office for Seniors is one of the few government agencies currently funding digital inclusion programmes, and partnering with community organisations to provide digital skills support and devices to seniors. The problem is that the funding for these programmes is time limited, but the need for digital support for seniors will continue. We ask that you support the Office's work in this area.

What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā



Victoria MacLennan



Kris Dempster Rivett

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

2 April 2024

Hon Dr. Shane Reti
Minister for Health
Minister for Pacific Peoples

S.Reti@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way (Source: Department of Internal Affairs)
130 000 households	Without internet access (Source: Census)
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 (Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely (Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity is an important issue for your Health and Pacific Peoples portfolios.

Health

Digital equity is an enabler for health outcomes and can make the health dollar go further. The health sector is increasingly reliant on people having digital access for appointments, health information and communication with their health provider. Online options can reduce the cost of building new facilities, and enable access to more services in more places. Digital equity will also enable better access to patient data (through Hira, the online platform in development). Without government support for digital skills and internet access, the health sector will not be able to realise these opportunities at scale. If patients don't have internet access, devices and digital skills, the benefits can only be partially realised, with telehealth only available to those who have digital access, leaving vulnerable New Zealanders behind.

Pacific peoples

NZIER analysis of Census data shows that Pacific peoples have the highest incidence of being without internet access at 24 percent, compared to 12 percent across the total population. An InternetNZ survey found that 63 percent of Pacific peoples are very concerned about people from low socio economic backgrounds having limited access to the internet, and 59 percent are very concerned about the cost.

Nineteen percent of Pacific Peoples do not have the essential digital skills needed to participate in the digital world, and digital upskilling has been identified as a critical area by and for Pacific people.

What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā



Victoria MacLennan



Kris Dempster Rivett

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

2 April 2024

Hon Melissa Lee

Minister for Media and Communications

Minister for Economic Development

Minister for Ethnic Communities

M.Lee@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way <i>(Source: Department of Internal Affairs)</i>
130 000 households	Without internet access <i>(Source: Census)</i>
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 <i>(Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)</i>
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely <i>(Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)</i>

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity is an important enabler across a range of your portfolios.

On the **communications** side, New Zealand needs to get value from its telecommunications infrastructure investments. We can't maximise this value if large numbers of people don't have internet access, the necessary digital skills or confidence to get online, access government services, explore their potential and become our future innovators.

Digital equity is an enabler of **economic growth**, as digital skills will help grow the tech sector and other sectors of the economy. Growing the pipeline of tech talent starts with learning the basics.

Digital equity also has a place in your **Ethnic Affairs** portfolio. Former refugees and marginalised migrants with English as a second language have been identified as one of the most digitally excluded groups¹. They have to date received less support from government initiatives compared to others.

What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

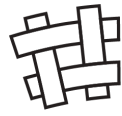
We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.

1

<https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/resources/research-and-reports/digital-inclusion-user-insights-for-mer-refugees-and-migrants-with-english-as-a-second-language/>



Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā

Victoria MacLennan

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

Kris Dempster Rivett

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

2 April 2024

Hon Tama Potaka

Minister for Māori Development

Associate Minister Housing

T.Potaka@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way <i>(Source: Department of Internal Affairs)</i>
130 000 households	Without internet access <i>(Source: Census)</i>
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 <i>(Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)</i>
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely <i>(Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)</i>

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity matters for both your Māori Development and Social Housing portfolios.

Maori Development

Research shows that Māori, relative to the total population, are missing out on opportunities the digital world offers.

For example, 14 percent of Māori households do not have internet at home. This is higher than the national average at around 10 percent. Māori communities [are saying](#) that the cost of internet access is a major barrier to being able to tap into a range of social, economic and education-related benefits. Māori of all ages and geographic locations see the need for digital skills training provided by people they know and trust.

Targeted interventions such as connecting rural marae have helped, but funding to pay for marae internet connections will shortly run out, leaving many marae with no way to pay for the internet that whānau rely on. There is very little funding available to scale up the digital skills programmes being offered at marae and elsewhere for whānau.

On the positive side, we are starting to see the impacts of digital upskilling programmes. In a recent [BNZ survey](#) on digital skills which found that 20 percent of New Zealanders do not have essential digital skills, Māori are doing better than the general population with lower shares of people with “below essential” digital skills. The challenge is to make digital upskilling opportunities available to more of our people.

Social Housing

[Research](#) shows that people living in social housing are far less likely to have internet access. A 2019 study found that just 69 percent of those living in Kainga Ora (or local equivalent) social housing report having access to the internet, compared to 91 percent of the total population. The Government could address this by providing low cost internet access as part of a social housing package.

The 20/20 Trust was involved in a research project commissioned by Kainga Ora and led by Digital Future Aotearoa. The result was a report with a number of recommendations, including two years of free internet for all new households. This would allow families to have greater access to digital services.

What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā



Victoria MacLennan



Kris Dempster Rivett

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

2 April 2024

Hon Penny Simmonds

Minister for Tertiary Education and Skills

Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment

Minister for Disability Issues

P.Simmonds@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way <i>(Source: Department of Internal Affairs)</i>
130 000 households	Without internet access <i>(Source: Census)</i>
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 <i>(Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)</i>
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely <i>(Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)</i>

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity matters for your Tertiary Education and Skills, Social Development and Employment, and Disability portfolios.

Disability issues

Digital skills, devices and internet access can help people with disabilities overcome physical and sensory barriers to full participation in society.

A [study](#) undertaken by the Department of Internal Affairs found that digital inclusion is likely to result in improved independence, ability to complete tasks in a timely manner, engage with the workplace and connect with people online. The study also found that the cost of accessing technology and digital services was a barrier. Interviewees were of the view that education for disabled people, particularly at an early age, would help ensure disabled people were able to keep up with the rapidly changing digital world. Participants in the study also stressed the need for better enforcement of the Web Accessibility Standard. The study concluded that disabled people need better access to devices, software, tools and support to engage digitally.

[NZIER analysis of Census data](#) shows that people with disability are less likely to have internet access than the general population. For example, 26 percent of people who report being unable to see at all are without internet, as are 25 percent of people who cannot hear at all. Twenty four percent of people with a lot of difficulty walking do not have internet access. These figures compare the 12 percent of households overall that report not having internet access.

Tertiary Education and Skills

Digital equity is a prerequisite for the tertiary education sector to be able to turn out the highly digitally skilled people the New Zealand tech sector and other tech enabled sectors of the New Zealand economy need. Growing the pipeline of tech talent starts with learning the basics. Without access to the digital basics - internet, devices and foundational digital skills - before people enter the tertiary system - it will not be possible to increase the number of highly digitally skilled New Zealanders. Students also need internet and device access while they are studying, and cost can be a barrier.

Addressing digital equity issues can also help the cash strapped tertiary sector. If students have foundational digital skills, devices and internet access then there is more potential to take learning online. This can reduce costs for bricks and mortar and other campus costs.

Social development and employment

Digital equity is one of the most significant social investments the Government could make. This is because being online and having digital skills is an enabler of so many things, including access to education, health care, good jobs, social connection and a wide range of government and other essential services.

Having more New Zealanders online and equipped with digital skills will also take pressure off the welfare system, by helping people move into employment and enabling access to government services online.

The Social Development and Employment portfolio has a key role to play in supporting digital equity efforts. For example by contributing to the costs of essentials such as internet and device access and digital skills training for New Zealanders dealing with income poverty. There is precedent for this approach with the Winter Energy Payment.

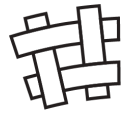
What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.



Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā

Victoria MacLennan

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

Kris Dempster Rivett

2 April 2024

Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Education
E.Stanford@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way (Source: Department of Internal Affairs)
130 000 households	Without internet access (Source: Census)
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 (Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely (Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity is a critical enabler of education outcomes. At a very practical level, young people need devices in the classroom and for homework. They also need internet access at home to be able to study. Digital skills will equip them to live their lives, gain employment and be the future innovators.

Digital access also enables the education system to deliver better outcomes and meet the needs of a diverse student base. Being online enables more people to learn in a way and at a time that works for them. Specialist subjects and other learning support can be offered to students in more schools and kura. Schools and kura can keep operating during ongoing disruption from the Covid-19 pandemic, measles outbreaks and extreme weather events.

To date the Ministry of Education is the only government agency to have done anything at scale to help New Zealanders on low incomes with digital access. It has done this through its Equitable Digital Access (EDA) programme, which has provided free internet connections and devices to families of school aged children who can't afford them. The EDA scaled up during the COVID lockdowns, but the need remains regardless of whether there is a pandemic.

You can help in two ways. First, by keeping the EDA running for another year to enable a whole of government solution to digital equity issues is identified. Second, by joining with other ministers to discuss what a whole of government solution might look like.

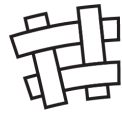
What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.



Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā

Victoria MacLennan

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

Kris Dempster Rivett

2 April 2024

Hon Lousie Upston

Minister for Social Development

Minister for Child Poverty Reduction

L.Upston@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way <i>(Source: Department of Internal Affairs)</i>
130 000 households	Without internet access <i>(Source: Census)</i>
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 <i>(Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)</i>
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely <i>(Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)</i>

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity is one of the most significant social investments the Government could make. This is because being online and having digital skills is an enabler of so many things, including access to education, health care, good jobs, social connection and a wide range of government and other essential services.

Having more New Zealanders online and equipped with digital skills will also take pressure off the welfare system, by helping people move into employment and enabling access to government services online.

As the Minister for Social Development and the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction you have a key role to play in opening up a conversation on the role of the welfare system in conjunction with low income earning households, whilst balancing the increase in cost of living in supporting digital equity efforts.

For example by contributing to the costs of essentials such as internet and device access and digital skills training for New Zealanders dealing with income poverty. There is precedent for this approach with the Winter Energy Payment. The problem with existing support, such as hardship allowances, is that the welfare system doesn't currently consider digital access (internet, devices and skills) to be essential.

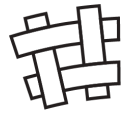
What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once. DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.



Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā

Victoria MacLennan

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

Kris Dempster Rivett

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz

2 April 2024

Hon Nicola Willis

Minister of Finance

Minister of Social Finance

Minister of Public Service

N.Willis@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe e te Minita

Accessing the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings

We are a future focused coalition of organisations with breadth and depth of experience working in community, with philanthropy, and with government on digital issues. Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa (DECA) connects and supports the digital inclusion community by shining light on initiatives, connecting people and projects, and offering space to collaborate and innovate. We believe that in working together we can have greater impact.

DECA has been thinking a lot about New Zealand's ability to harness the opportunities that an increasingly digital world brings. We have also been thinking about how having more New Zealanders access the digital world can help solve a number of the problems the Government is tackling.

The key to it all is ensuring that everyone has access to the internet and devices (such as laptops and tablets), digital skills, and confidence and support to get online. This end result is what we call digital equity. Some talk about digital enablement, digital inclusion, digital access, and digital divides. The underlying issue is that if we don't ensure New Zealanders have the access to the foundations, we can't hope to achieve the digital excellence needed to grow our economy.

Looking around it may seem like everyone has internet access at home and on the go, has a laptop, and the skills and support to navigate the online world safely and confidently.

Unfortunately that is not the case. And it's holding us back. Here is snapshot of the current state:

One in five New Zealanders	Digitally excluded in some way <i>(Source: Department of Internal Affairs)</i>
130 000 households	Without internet access <i>(Source: Census)</i>
380 000 households	Cannot afford internet and device access 58 000 of these are families on incomes less than \$42 200 <i>(Source: Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa)</i>
20 percent of New Zealand adults	Lack the essential skills needed to use the internet safely <i>(Source: BNZ Digital Skills Report)</i>

Getting more New Zealanders online would help in so many ways:

- The **cost of living** crisis. Being able to shop and bank online saves money.
- **Digitising government** (and reducing the cost of government services). This can't happen to its full potential with large numbers of households without internet access and 20 percent without the necessary digital skills to access government services online.
- **Digital skills** for small businesses and tech enabled sectors. If people don't have access to the basics they cannot later become the highly skilled people our tech sector and other New Zealand businesses need. Digital skills also mean highly paid jobs. **Economic growth** results when these businesses can grow.
- Making the **health** dollar go further. Online options enable access to more services in more places and can reduce the cost of building new facilities.
- **Education**. Providing specialist subjects and other learning support to students in more schools and kura, and teaching the digital excellence that New Zealand needs.
- **Housing** supply. More people being able to work remotely will enable them to live in places with less pressure on housing supply.
- **Climate change**. Reducing emissions by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less.

Why this matters for your portfolio

Digital equity is an important issue for your social investment, climate change, and public services portfolios.

Social investment

Digital equity is one of the most significant social investments the Government could make. This is because being online and having digital skills is an enabler of so many things, including access to education, health care, good jobs, social cohesion and a wide range of government and other essential services. As noted above, it is an investment that can more than pay for itself.

As the Minister for Social Investment you have a key role to play in leading a ministerial discussion about digital equity.

Digital public services

As Minister for the Public Service you need to think about the implications of government services being online. Online services save the Government money. Less staff costs and bricks and mortar, and the potential to reach many people. But with this comes a need to ensure that New Zealanders have the digital skills and internet access they need to access those services. Digitisation of government services and closure of face to face services is a really big part of the demand on digital equity community services that are not funded by government.

Climate change

There are benefits for the Climate Change portfolio. Digital equity can help with emissions reduction, by allowing more business to be done online and more people to work from home and travel less. There are also benefits for climate change adaptation, enabling communities to connect, get vital information and continue to work and learn remotely when extreme weather events make travel difficult.

What we are asking

Because digital equity affects so many parts of government we are writing to a range of ministers. Our ask is that ministers come together to discuss digital equity and how it can help address the challenges New Zealand is facing, and commission policy work on what a whole-of-government contribution to a digital equity partnership might look like. What we need from you is an undertaking to consider the issue.

We understand that the Government has a lot on its plate at the moment, and that it needs to balance the books. You have inherited this issue and you don't have to try and fix it all at once.

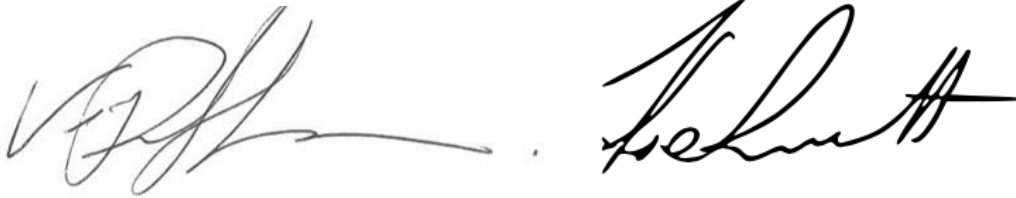
DECA can contribute to the policy process by sharing research on who is most in need and proposals for how community, philanthropy and government can work together.

Research also shows that investing in digital equity can pay for itself and save you money. Analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Digital Council shows a conservative estimate of around \$3 for every \$1 invested, in terms of benefits to households and savings to the Government in avoided social costs.

NERA Economic Consulting, in a [report](#) commissioned by the Spark Foundation, estimates the annual economic benefit of connecting the 130 000 households that currently don't have internet access is between \$464m and \$737 million.

DECA would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss New Zealand's digital future and how we can work together to empower more New Zealanders to take part.

Nāku noa, nā



Victoria MacLennan

Kris Dempster Rivett

Ngā Kaiurungi | Co-Chairs DECA
Digital Equity Coalition Aotearoa

www.digitalequity.nz | kiaora@digitalequity.nz