# Digital Strategy Consultation Response

February 2017

### A network of Digital Technology Hubs across our communities

### What is your idea?

The creation of advanced Technology Hubs throughout Scotland’s network of public libraries would empower communities and ensure equality of access.

By establishing free, readily available Technology Hubs every member of society could benefit from the educational, economic, cultural and social benefits technology offers.

The hubs would feature a range of up-to-date devices -including laptops/PCs, 3D printers, scanners, digital media production hardware, Arduino/littleBits kits, sandbox machines, virtual reality kits – as well as associated industry standard software. The hubs should also offer agile co-working spaces, with whiteboards, projectors and appropriate furniture.

Offering unrestricted access to high-spec kit is already a well–established approach elsewhere, most notably in Scandinavian libraries such as those in Denmark and Sweden. Here, supporting the digital needs of citizens not only offers all in society access to digital, it encourages enterprise.

### Why is your idea important?

Access to the latest technologies will always be a barrier for some individuals and businesses in the continual trade-off between affordability and obsolescence created by the pace of technological change.

Creating an anchor point in communities – offering access to the very latest technologies and appropriate support - equips all citizens with the means to engage in the digital world and be supported in its evolution throughout their lives.

Having access to a form of [digital media lab](https://journals.ala.org/ltr/article/view/4311/4963) fosters the creation of a more digitally adept society. One which is fully able to participate in and benefit from the personal and economic opportunities of the digital sphere.

Libraries would essentially serve as incubators for small businesses and individuals to explore their creative, social and economic potential. They would have access to all the resources needed to ensure their skills remained current, contributing to both employability and profitability.

Scotland’s public libraries are well-placed to fulfil this role through the existing network of around 500 branches, spanning the length and breadth of the country and serving all types of communities.

The national strategy for public libraries, [Ambition and Opportunity](http://scottishlibraries.org/national-strategy/), outlines a role for libraries in hosting such maker spaces and co-working facilities for small businesses.

As a result Scotland’s public libraries are already developing in this area – with all services in Scotland offering access to 3D printers, and a network of specially trained Champions now established to support their use.

There are existing [examples of technology hubs in libraries](http://chattlibrary.org/4th-floor) in parts of North America, Scandinavia and elsewhere.

Investing in innovative and aspirational public library Technology Hubs would be a step towards a world class digital economy that is centred on equality of opportunity.

## A nationwide system to monitor public access technology provision & digital skills support

### What is your idea?

Establishing a National Technology Monitoring System for the public and third sector has the potential to improve public technology services and ultimately user experience.

The system would evaluate existing technology services and public access provision – working around the digital agenda. This would create a set of national technology benchmarks which could be used for strategic planning at both local and national level.

Similar systems have already been established through the world, being particularly successful in [public libraries in the United States](http://www.libraryedge.org/).

### Why is your idea important?

The system would naturally create a fuller picture of the current provision currently available through organisations in the public and third sector. It would also identify gaps in the system – highlighting areas ripe for future development.

Organisations serving the same communities could then pool their resources, working together to ultimately improve technology services. This would reduce and potentially eliminate duplication and help identify areas of success. Funds could then be more accurately designated to under-served communities or areas of high priority.

## Define Digital Literacy

### What is your idea?

The Scottish Government should publish a definition of digital literacy which encompasses the myriad capacities associated with this term.

### Why is your idea important?

Digital literacy is a broad term which is often taken to mean different things.

It covers the ability to effectively, and safely, locate, manage, analyse, evaluate and create information using digital technologies. The term can also be used to indicate technical proficiency or computational skills.

In order to maximise the impact of all agencies working to support digital literacy, it is essential that these bodies have a shared understanding of this term and related concepts. This will facilitate a fuller understanding of the challenges or barriers which must be addressed, while enabling stakeholders to identify partnership working opportunities more readily.

Good examples of this already exist elsewhere such as this [Canadian example](http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy-fundamentals/digital-literacy-fundamentals).