

# Project Compass:

Bridging the Digital Divide In Your Community



**PROJECT  
COMPASS**  
*Powered by merit*

“Being part of Merit and Project Compass has allowed me to learn from and be empowered by inspiring leaders who share valuable knowledge through their example. **Merit and Project Compass will help you grow personally and develop new skills and insights** for yourself and your community.”

— GERSON REYES, BSW  
Lead Worship Pastor, Jesús is the Way Church

“I found serving on the task force to be an invaluable experience. It provided me with deeper insights into the community’s areas of need, the resources available, and the unique capabilities that Compass can offer to address those needs.

If you’re not yet familiar with Merit and Project Compass, I encourage you to get involved. **They are deeply passionate about supporting our community and actively engage with the local people who have needs.** It’s a rewarding way to make a real difference.”

— STEVEN W. BLODGETT, MBA  
Information Technology  
Manager, MyMichigan Health

“I was so impressed with the thoughtful level of care put into community outreach efforts. When surveying members of the community, **Project Compass was respectful of everyone’s time and opinion** and made sure to welcome feedback from all ages.

When I joined the Project Compass Task Force, I was new to the area, and as a result of this collaboration, I have a thorough understanding of the technology challenges facing the families in our town, and detailed action plans for how to address them. I am so glad that I was able to be a part of it!”

— MILAN HARDEN  
Librarian, Van Buren District  
Library, Covert Branch

“What was most helpful for me about being involved in Project Compass was learning from other members about the barriers our residents face in the new digital age we are in.”

— DIANE NIELSEN  
Director, Grants and School-  
Based Health Service,  
MidMichigan Community  
Health Services

## What is Project Compass?

**Project Compass is a community-guided program created by Merit Network**, a nonprofit organization supported by Michigan’s public universities that has helped the state’s educational community for over 60 years. With support from the United States Department of Agriculture, Project Compass helps towns and neighborhoods in Michigan find practical ways to improve comfort with basic technology and make sure everyone can use online resources easily and affordably.

By bringing together local groups and community voices, this program helps pinpoint what each area needs most, find ways to get the right tools and support, and build lasting solutions so people can stay connected.



# Project Compass



## What Your Community Can Expect

By the time Project Compass finishes its work in your area, your community will have several important results, along with a clear plan for moving forward:

- **Community Listening Tours:** These events give everyone a chance to talk about their experiences and challenges with getting online. It's a way to make sure your thoughts and needs are heard before any important decisions are made.
- **Surveys:** People in your community will be invited to take easy-to-understand surveys about their internet use, technology needs, and where they need help. This information will help shape solutions that fit exactly what your community needs.
- **Internet and Technology Study:** Experts will take a close look at what internet service and technology your area already has, and what's missing. This will help to determine the current state of infrastructure and use that information to make informed decisions.
- **Finding Funding:** The project team will help you discover different ways to pay for new digital projects and improvements, such as government programs or private support.
- **Help with Grant Applications:** Project Compass will help create clear and powerful stories about your community's needs, which can be used to apply for funding to support your digital efforts.
- **Building a Local Leadership Group:** Your community will put together a team of people from different backgrounds—like neighbors, business owners, and teachers—to help guide these improvements and make sure they last.
- **Training Materials:** Easy guides and lessons will be offered to help people learn to use technology, safely browse the internet, and get connected to important online services.
- **Working with Other Communities:** Your community will have the chance to team up with others across the state to share good ideas and save money by working together.

## What Is The Role Of Your Community?

Your community is a key partner in Project Compass. Local residents, leaders, and organizations will form a group to guide this work and represent everyone's needs. You'll share helpful feedback about what's working and where help is needed.

Together with the help of Project Compass, you'll help pinpoint the biggest challenges to getting online and learning new skills. The Project Compass team will provide support every step of the way—helping you with technology questions, understanding rules, and showing you how to get the funding you need—so your community can make the most of online opportunities and succeed in today's digital world.

