What is the Illinois Community Technology Centers BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE ASSESSMENT INDEX?
The Illinois Connecting my Community project addresses access to communication technologies and strategies for bridging the digital divide in Illinois. Early on, stakeholders to the project (users, funders, educators, community leaders, legislators and others) have identified key issues to improving access, digital literacy and other factors contributing to the digital divide in Illinois. Their feedback implied that emphasis should be less about measuring the elimination of the digital divide in terms of physical access to technology and more about measuring change in the cultural aspects of communications and information technology adoption. Specifically, a state program for bridging the digital divide needs to focus on:
1. Expanding the diversity of users;
2. Improving computer skills and literacy of users;
3. Building user self-esteem and comfort level in using telecommunications technology;
4. Providing services to all users including businesses, educators, government workers, social service staff, not-for-profit agencies and others; and
5. Working with others in the community to improve skills and digital literacy.

In this project, Community Technology Centers (CTCs) are the outreach component, providing access to technology and opportunities for people and organizations to learn about technology, computers and the Internet. To address issues specific to eliminating the digital divide in Illinois, 15 CTCs are working toward providing services within the framework of the five criteria suggested by the stakeholders. The Assessment Index will measure how well each CTC works toward meeting some or all of those criteria. CTCs in the pilot may target all five programmatic areas, or choose to focus on one or two areas until they believe they are successfully achieving a specific programmatic goal.

Why is the Assessment Index Important?
The Index is a diagnostic and evaluation survey designed to provide feedback on how well each center, and all the centers in aggregate, are addressing digital divide discrepancies. For each question in the survey, the CTC is assigned points which, in aggregate, generate an index, thereby creating one quantitative measure of their effectiveness in reaching program goals.

Completing the survey provides the CTC with direct feedback of how well it is addressing digital divide issues locally and provides the project team with information about the impact of all projects in the State. The Index is unique to each CTC. Because of discrepancies in size of CTCs or in the scope of programs they offer, the Index is not a good comparative measure of performance among the CTCs. It will not be used to compare the performance of one CTC to others in the project. Using the tool for evaluation staff can identify programmatic areas where they need to invest or areas where they are providing substantial services or training.

How Can the Assessment Index be used as a Benchmarking Tool?
The score or index value generated by the survey can provide a baseline measure describing the current capacity of the center to provide effective programming and to work with other community partners to deliver telecommunications access and training prior to participation in the project. When the survey is completed over a five to ten year period, on a biannual basis, the CTC can gauge how well it is meeting the goals identified by the project stakeholders. In this capacity, the Index becomes an effective benchmarking tool.
The assessment provides feedback for five programmatic categories:
Questions in the assessment index focus on five programmatic goals (questions relating to change in user self esteem and confidence are not included in this survey). The five focus areas include an assessment of how effectively the CTC is:
1. Programming for a diverse user group.
2. Building literacy skills.
3. Building Community partnerships
4. Making a difference to people and organizations participating in the program.
5. Instituting a Center technology plan.

How to Interpret Your Score?
The survey generates an index value and a separate score for each of the five programmatic areas. A perfect score for the total index and for each of the individual program areas is 100%. It is unlikely that any one center could achieve the perfect score of 100% for any of the program areas. These values serve as guidelines for measuring progress as the project evolves, enabling the center and project team to objectively judge where to target resources, and to identify which areas are showing improvement and which program areas need more attention. Use the scores to guide your investment into various program areas to meet the needs of users and stakeholders. You can view previous scores by looking at your archive.

Who Should Complete the Assessment Index?
The survey includes some questions that are subjective and require extensive knowledge about the basic operation of the Center and more importantly, of the users that participate in its programs. Therefore, it is important that senior center staff complete the assessment index. It is recommended that one or two people on staff consistently enter the survey data.

Making a distinction between basic and digital literacy. The assessment distinguishes between the CTC role of building basic literacy skills (reading and writing) and with providing training to build digital literacy associated with using computer software, familiarity with the Internet, using email, etc.

How to Complete the Assessment Index?
To log in, go to http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/ctc. Sign in with an easy to remember User ID and password. Create a user ID and password unique to your Center. Sign in again with your new user ID and password. The first page asks you to enter today’s date, name of the CTC and the name of the person answering the survey questions. Then you are ready to “Start the Questionnaire”.

The survey is divided into two pages. Answer the questions on the first page. When you finish, enter “Calculate total score on this page;” then press “Save Your Score and Go To the Next Step.” Complete the questions on the second page and again click on “Calculate total score on this page” and “Save Your Score and Go to the Next Step.”

How to Keep Track of Your Scores?
The software archives previous Assessment scores for you to track change in performance. Use this table to record your scores if you don’t want to go online to retrieve these statistics.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Score</th>
<th>Index</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>Making a Difference</td>
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<td>Center Tech Plan</td>
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For Help with the Assessment Index
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