Recover Delaware Roundtable #2: **Digitization**

By Morgan Cohen, Collin Willard, and Troy Mix, July 2021

From remote work and telehealth appointments to grocery deliveries and virtual public meetings, key business, community, and household activities have been digitized as a COVID-19 mitigation strategy. As we emerge from the pandemic, these developments will not suddenly disappear. This document outlines digitization trends for governments and community groups to consider in recovery planning.

Digitization of Work

By late 2020, nearly 57% of American workers were remote at least part of the time.[i] Though many have and will return to more frequent in-person work, employee and employer sentiments and plans point to the potential durability of remote work trends:

Employee Sentiments and Plans[ii]	Employer Sentiments and Plans[iii,iv]
• 87% want remote work at least 1X/week • Nearly half of workers report saving money and time by working remotely • 1-in-3 would not work for an employer who required them on-site, full time	• 87% are adjusting their real estate strategies, including pulling back from premier business districts • 78% see remote collaboration as an enduring workplace trend • 61% see low-density workplaces as the future reality

Continued adoption of remote work could impact real estate markets, migration and transportation patterns, and economic development opportunities.[v,vi] However, these impacts will differ across households, businesses, and communities based on varying abilities to work remotely and a host of cost and quality of life considerations.[vii] Planning for a resilient future requires considering the effects that remote work may have on communities and how these impacts may be shaped by policy.[viii,ix]

Digitization of Services

E-Commerce

New and emerging delivery models have opened the door to real-time fulfillment of a wider range of goods and services in a growing number of U.S. locations. Recent trends and forecasts include:

- E-Commerce accounted for 15.7% of U.S. retail sales at the height of the pandemic—up from 11.4% pre-pandemic—and global forecasts project a 25% share by 2024.[x,xi]
- An estimated 80% of global consumers are now using contactless payment systems.[xii]
- May 2021 data indicated "sales for meal delivery services grew 17% year-over-year."[xiii]

Digital Healthcare

Telehealth services in Delaware increased significantly during the pandemic, with claims for primary physician services delivered by telehealth increasing from approximately 10,000 in 2019 to just under 200,000 in 2020.[xiv] As a result of the Telehealth Access Preservation and Modernization Act, telehealth will continue to be a healthcare option for Delaware patients.[xv]

Digital Government

While governments digitized services and operations during the pandemic as a public health measure, increased digitization in other sectors points toward a growing and continued expectation for digital delivery of public services. Digitization can optimize services, facilitate public engagement, and better communicate and track the purpose and outcomes of policies, while also enabling recovery from destructive events.[xvi,xvii] Core components of resilient digital governments include:

Aspect of Digitized Government	Why does it matter in the context of resilience?
Digital Government Outreach	Cultivates collaborative work, streamlines communication among stakeholders, and gathers information from traditionally hard-to-reach demographics
Online Accessibility	Enables greater engagement with government activities and resources through venues such as digital public meetings and digitized services
Optimized Government	Simplifies and speeds government processes, frameworks, and metrics to make government more responsive to citizen needs and help agencies access concrete data to plan for the future
Data-Driven Policy and Assessment	Allows governments to collect higher quality data on the implementation of specific policy initiatives to better track, evaluate, and communicate outcomes

Opportunities to Plan, Invest, and Act on Digitization

Most signs point toward digitization being a significant and growing part of the lives of businesses, households, and organizations. Planning for a resilient community might involve consideration of the following digitization characteristics and leverage points:

1. *Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity*,
2. *Digital Capacity and Awareness*,
3. *Reinventing Processes and Policies*, and
4. *Rethinking Spaces and Places*.

With these characteristics and leverage points in mind, the July 2021 Recover Delaware Roundtable invited stakeholders to discuss opportunities for shaping resilient digital communities in Delaware.

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