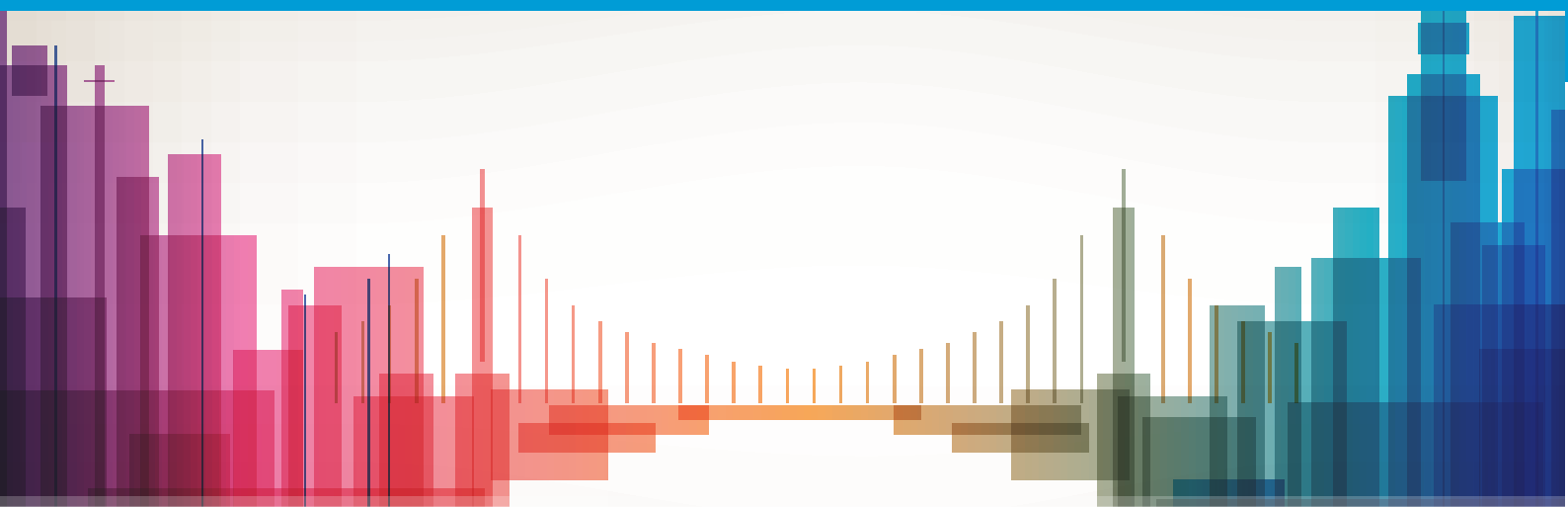




The Cybersmile Foundation

Case study of the U4SSC Guide to Digital Wellbeing



Convention on
Biological Diversity



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Foreword

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Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of their respective organizations or U4SSC members. In line with the U4SSC principles, this report does not promote the adoption and use of Smart City technology. It advocates for policies encouraging responsible use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) that contribute to the economic, environmental and social sustainability as well as the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation	Full Form
AI	Artificial intelligence
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal



1 Introduction

In 2010, as the digital world became an integral part of everyday life, a group of people united around a vision where everyone could connect online without fear of harassment, cyberbullying or hostility. This vision sparked the creation of the Cybersmile Foundation, a non-profit organization that has since grown to operate out of London, Palo Alto and New York, reaching many people each year. Cybersmile's mission was clear from the start, to help individuals and communities experience the benefits of digital connectivity while feeling safe, secure and respected. This study has been prepared based on publicly available information. All insights and analyses are derived from information within the public domain.

Central to Cybersmile's work there is a guiding structure that revolves around awareness, support, and education. Through awareness campaigns, Cybersmile opens eyes to the impact of cyberbullying and online abuse, bringing these issues out of the shadows. Their support services offer lifelines to those facing online harm, providing professional guidance and a space where people can feel understood and cared for. Education, the third pillar, is perhaps the most powerful. Through engaging programmes on topics like netiquette and online safety, Cybersmile equips people with tools to navigate the digital world thoughtfully¹.

2 Background & context

The Digital Wellbeing initiative is a natural extension of The Cybersmile Foundation's dedication to fostering a safer, more positive online experience by addressing cyberbullying and promoting digital health. Cybersmile's regular digital wellbeing reports exemplify its commitment to research-backed strategies for combatting online harm.

With each study, the foundation ensures that its programmes remain aligned with the shifting dynamics of digital spaces. Their initiative provides essential data to guide policy, informs platform design and supports continuous research into online safety and mental wellness.

Cybersmile's journey is not just about addressing the online abuse of today. It's about forming and shaping a culture of empathy and resilience online, preparing future generations to build a digital world rooted in kindness, respect and self-respect, diversity and inclusion. With each life they touch, Cybersmile moves closer to their vision, a world where everyone can explore, learn and connect online without fear or anxiety, knowing they are part of a safe, supportive community².

¹ Cybersmile. *Who We Are*. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.cybersmile.org/who-we-are.

² Cybersmile. *Research Center*. Cybersmile. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.cybersmile.org/what-we-do/research-center.



3 Digital Wellbeing Intervention/Initiative

The Cybersmile Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting digital wellbeing and combatting cyberbullying. With cyberbullying and online harassment on the rise, this organization has taken up the mantle of promoting digital wellbeing and combating the dark side of the Internet.

Overview of the Digital Wellbeing Initiatives

1. The why that moves the Foundation

The Cybersmile Foundation aims to create a safer and more positive digital environment. Their initiatives target online bullying, harassment and the psychological impact of negative and destructive online experiences. (Source: The Cybersmile Foundation web site <https://www.cybersmile.org>)

2. Those they champion

The Foundation's programmes are designed for various demographics, including children, teenagers, parents, educators and professionals. They recognize the unique challenges faced by different groups in the digital landscape.

3. Aligned in action

Educational resources: The foundation offers a wealth of educational materials, including articles, guides and webinars that focus on digital citizenship, emotional resilience and strategies to deal with cyberbullying.

The support circle: They provide support through a helpline and online counselling, helping individuals cope with the emotional and psychological impacts of cyberbullying. Cybersmile provides free access to resources and support services for those affected by online issues, including their artificial intelligence (AI)-powered Cybersmile Assistant.

The community circle: The foundation promotes community events that foster discussions around digital wellbeing and cyberbullying. In their quest to create a kinder and constructive Internet, Cybersmile has become a powerful voice for change. Their worldwide campaigns reverberate across social media, reaching millions and drawing attention to the harmful effects of online abuse and the urgent need for compassion in digital spaces. (Source: The Cybersmile Foundation website <https://www.cybersmile.org>)



Ties that build: The Cybersmile Foundation collaborates with schools, corporations and other organizations to implement programmes that promote safe online practices, and create a culture of kindness and respect in digital spaces³.

Multi-channel campaigns and advocacy: Cybersmile actively advocates for online safety by running global campaigns that focus on the impact of online abuse, Internet safety and the importance of kindness and empathy in digital spaces. They collaborate with celebrities, influencers and brands to extend their message and reach larger audiences⁴

Digital wellbeing research: The foundation conducts research to gain insights into the online behaviours and experiences of users. This data helps to shape their approach and informs policymakers, tech companies and educators on how to create safer online environments.

Online gamers' support: The Cybersmile Foundation's Gaming Support Center offers a range of tailored resources and services specifically designed to assist gamers facing online abuse and harassment. For instance, The Gaming Support Center provides a wealth of information tailored for gamers, including articles and guides that address various issues related to in-game abuse, emotional resilience and positive gaming practices. Cybersmile educates gamers about the reporting tools available within most games for flagging toxic behavior.

This knowledge helps players take action against harassment, promoting a safer gaming experience. The centre also emphasizes the importance of online safety by providing tips on protecting personal information from scams and exploitation, ensuring that gamers can enjoy their experiences without compromising their security. The centre helps gamers develop a deeper understanding of the various forms of abuse and toxicity they may encounter while gaming online. This awareness is crucial for recognizing harmful behaviours and fostering a more supportive community^{5 6}.

The Foundation's approach aims to educate, raise awareness and provide practical tools to help Internet users, especially young people, maintain healthy digital habits and protect their mental wellbeing in the online world.

³ "Zink Talent and the Cybersmile Foundation Announce Partnership Ahead of Stop Cyberbullying Day." *EIN Presswire*, 16 May 2023. Accessed 20 Oct. 2024. www.einpresswire.com/article/711502223/zink-talent-and-the-cybersmile-foundation-announce-partnership-ahead-of-stop-cyberbullying-day.

⁴ "Cybersmile Launch Digital Wellbeing Campaign on World Mental Health Day 2022." *Cybersmile*. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.cybersmile.org/news/cybersmile-launch-digital-wellbeing-campaign-on-world-mental-health-day-2022.

⁵ "Cybersmile & ESL Partner to Tackle Abuse and Promote Inclusive Gaming." Cybersmile Foundation, 2016. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. <https://www.cybersmile.org/2016/09/28/cybersmile-esl-partner-to-tackle-abuse-and-promote-inclusive-gaming/>.

⁶ "Cybersmile Selected for New Riot Games Impact Challenge Initiative." Cybersmile Foundation, 2016. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. <https://www.cybersmile.org/2016/10/11/cybersmile-selected-for-new-riot-games-impact-challenge-initiative/>.



4 Implementation of the Digital Wellbeing Intervention/Initiative

The phases, timelines and challenges for the implementation are not mentioned publicly. The Cybersmile Foundation's digital wellbeing initiative can primarily contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 - Good Health and Well-being. By promoting digital wellness and addressing cyberbullying, the initiative supports mental health and overall wellbeing. The initiative likely includes educational components about digital citizenship and online safety that can contribute to SDG 4 that focuses on the quality of education and lifelong learning opportunities.

In a world where social media transforms at lightning speed, new challenges surface just as quickly. For the foundation, this can include constantly rethinking its strategies and refreshing its educational programmes to keep pace with emerging threats. Each platform shift brings fresh concerns and with them, new forms of online harassment. Among these challenges is the rise of cancel culture that has gained momentum intensifying online harassment and fostering a culture of public shaming. As individuals face the risk of being "canceled," the foundation may find itself navigating this complex terrain, committed to protecting online safety while adapting to the unpredictable landscape of digital interactions⁷.

5 Results and outcomes

Implementation, results, and outcomes of Cybersmile Foundation Initiatives

The Cybersmile Foundation's initiatives are grounded in evidence-based strategies that promote online safety and mental health awareness. They utilize digital tools like apps, helplines and educational resources to reach a wide demographic globally. One of the key components of their approach is the collaboration with major tech companies, integrating their policies and tools to prevent and report online abuse. Training programmes in schools and workshops for educators and parents are also a major focus, providing the tools necessary to recognize and combat online harassment.

Results: Cybersmile has achieved notable success in spreading awareness about cyberbullying and providing support to victims. Their partnerships with social media platforms have contributed to the introduction of anti-bullying features such as enhanced reporting systems, filters and AI-driven content moderation.

Outcomes: The Foundation's efforts have fostered a more informed and resilient online community, reducing the psychological impact of cyberbullying. Cybersmile's initiatives have empowered

⁷ Joan Creative. "The Cybersmile Foundation's Modern Witch Trials." *Creativebrief*, www.creativebrief.com/agency/joan-creative/case-studies/the-cybersmile-foundation-s-modern-witch-trials. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024.



individuals to stand up against online abuse, fostering an environment where empathy and positivity can thrive⁸.

6 Assessment of the Digital Wellbeing Intervention/Initiative

The Cybersmile Foundation has conducted several digital wellbeing reports in recent years, providing valuable insights into young people's relationships with technology and social media to assess the intervention/initiative.

- The Cybersmile Foundation recently released “Beyond Likes 2024”, a national report in the U.S. examining the effects of cyberbullying on social media users' mental health. These findings in the survey underscore the urgent need for greater resources and education to support those affected by cyberbullying and foster a safer online environment⁹.
- In 2022, Cybersmile conducted “The State of Play Report,” a national study in the U.S. This report explored the prevalence and emotional impact of identity-based cyberbullying on Gen Z. The findings revealed concerning figures about online harassment based on various identity factors¹⁰.
- Cybersmile, in collaboration with a social media platform, published “Banter or Bullying? No Offence” in 2020. This study investigated young people's perceptions of offence and where they draw the line between banter and bullying⁹.
- The “Digital Wellbeing 2022” report provided a national perspective on young people's understanding of digital wellbeing in the U.K.¹¹.
- The “Social America” report by The Cybersmile Foundation offered insights into Millennial and Gen Z attitudes towards social media in the U.S., based on responses from more than 20 000 participants¹².

⁸ The Cybersmile Foundation. *Cybersmile Education Program*. Cybersmile Foundation, 2023, <https://cybersmileeducation.org/>. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024.

⁹ “Cybersmile Publishes Beyond Likes 2024 Report Focusing on Mental Health & Social Media.” *Cybersmile*. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.cybersmile.org/news/cybersmile-publishes-beyond-likes-2024-report-focusing-on-mental-health-social-media#:~:text=The%20findings%20from%20Beyond%20Likes,this%20is%20a%20terrifying%20reality.

¹⁰ *The Cybersmile Foundation State of Play Report*. Stop Cyberbullying Day, 2022. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.stopcyberbullyingday.org/app/uploads/2022/03/The-Cybersmile-Foundation-State-of-Play-Report.pdf.

¹¹ “Banter or Bullying? A Report Exploring the Relationship Between Banter and Bullying in the U.K.” *Cybersmile*. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.cybersmile.org/news/banter-or-bullying-a-report-exploring-the-relationship-between-banter-and-bullying-in-the-u-k.

¹² “Cybersmile Publishes National Digital Wellbeing 2022 Report Examining the Impact of Social Media Use on Gen Z Wellbeing in the U.K.” *Cybersmile*. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.cybersmile.org/news/cybersmile-publish-national-digital-wellbeing-2022-report-examining-the-impact-of-social-media-use-on-gen-z-wellbeing-in-the-u-k.



- In partnership with the Foundation, Rimmel commissioned a major international study and launched a global campaign to stand up for women worldwide who have experienced beauty cyberbullying¹³.

These various surveys and global campaigns collectively paint a comprehensive picture of the digital landscape, highlighting the challenges faced by young people online, particularly in terms of cyberbullying, harassment and the impact on mental health and wellbeing. The Foundation serves as a significant example in the study of digital wellbeing¹⁴.

All reports are accessible via the Foundation web page Research Center <https://www.cybersmile.org/what-we-do/research-center>.

7 Conclusion

Lessons learned

Cybersmile's work serves as a comprehensive reminder that, in any digital transformation, addressing online safety and mental health proactively is essential for creating positive and sustainable online environments.

Encouraging digital literacy and resilience: Cybersmile's efforts in digital literacy highlight the need to educate users, particularly young people, on managing online interactions, recognizing harmful behaviours, protecting their self-esteem and responding constructively. This insight is valuable for developing training programmes that improve resilience and foster responsible digital citizenship.

Promoting inclusive online spaces: Cybersmile initiatives emphasize inclusivity, advocating for safe spaces for vulnerable communities who may face higher rates of online harassment. Inclusivity-focused policies and moderation guidelines can encourage diverse and supportive online environments.

Engagement with stakeholders: Cybersmile collaborates with platforms, educational institutions and companies to promote digital safety. Such partnerships demonstrate the importance of cross-sector collaboration for tackling complex cyber issues and leveraging collective expertise to foster healthier online ecosystems.

¹³ *Social America Report: The Cybersmile Foundation*. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.cybersmile.org/wp-content/uploads/Social-America-Report-The-Cybersmile-Foundation.pdf.

¹⁴ "'I Will Not Be Deleted': Rimmel Tackles Beauty Cyberbullying with This Powerful New Campaign." *Grazia Magazine*. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024. www.graziamagazine.com/articles/i-will-not-be-deleted-rimmel-tackles-beauty-cyberbullying-with-this-powerful-new-campaign.



User-centric design for wellbeing: Cybersmile's focus on wellbeing shows how digital transformation efforts should prioritize user-centric design that considers user mental health and safety. This could involve enhanced privacy settings, wellbeing check-ins and creating accessible channels for reporting abuse.

Data-driven policy making: Their reports, driven by survey data, highlight the effectiveness of evidence-based policy-making. Organizations can leverage this approach to craft more targeted and impactful digital safety policies that address specific user concerns.

Another important lesson is the need for continuous adaptation. As technology evolves, so do the ways in which cyberbullying occurs, meaning that Cybersmile's initiatives must constantly evolve to stay effective.

As part of the analysis, several critical success factors can be prioritized to achieve success in such platforms.

Building strategic partnerships: Engaging closely with social media platforms and technology firms are vital to co-develop policies and tools that effectively combat cyberbullying, leveraging their reach and technical expertise.

Establishing comprehensive support services: A 24/7 helpline and robust digital support resources are essential to provide timely assistance to individuals affected by cyberbullying worldwide, ensuring they receive support whenever needed.

Expanding educational outreach: Implementing training programmes in schools and developing accessible online resources foster greater awareness and understanding of the risks tied to online behaviours, empowering users to navigate the digital space safely.

Fostering a global reach: Expanding initiatives across various regions, languages and cultures enable the Foundation to tackle cyberbullying from a truly global perspective, making the approach inclusive and adaptable to diverse communities.

Transferability to other cities and communities

The Cybersmile Foundation can make a significant impact in a city-based or community-centric model. This would involve working closely with local governments, educational institutions and community organizations to build a potential framework that promotes positive digital interactions.

For instance:

- Cybersmile's educational programmes could be adapted to citywide campaigns, promoting safe online behaviour across schools, community centers and public spaces, fostering a shared digital culture that emphasizes respect and empathy.



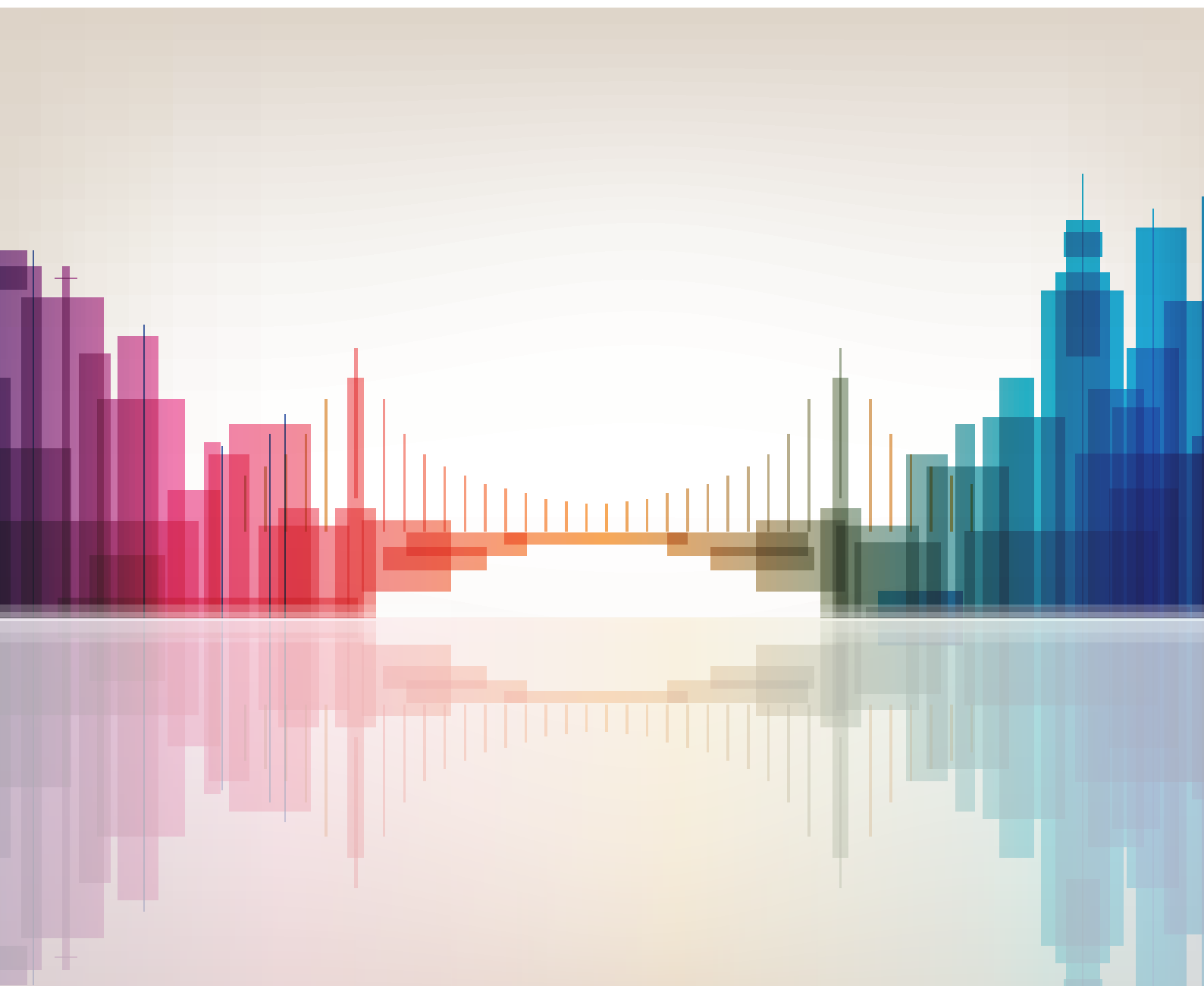
- Workshops and resources tailored to address community-specific digital challenges can further enhance awareness and provide practical tools for navigating online conflicts.
- Cities could also benefit from the foundation's support in training local leaders and volunteers who would then act as digital wellbeing advocates within their communities. These advocates could address pressing issues such as online harassment and misinformation, with Cybersmile's methodologies encouraging a proactive approach to online citizenship.
- Additionally, by partnering with city digital transformation initiatives, the Cybersmile model could integrate people-centric Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), evaluating the health of digital interactions within urban populations, enhancing the city's overall digital resilience.

Cybersmile's initiatives are intentionally crafted to be adaptable, allowing them to align with a wide range of cultural, linguistic and technological environments. Through a combination of awareness campaigns, accessible support resources and youth-centered outreach, the Foundation presents a versatile framework that communities can customize to address their unique challenges while upholding fundamental principles such as empathy, inclusivity and digital responsibility. Whether embedded within educational curricula, community programming or local digital policy efforts, Cybersmile's model can serve as a dynamic and effective guide for fostering safer, more compassionate online spaces worldwide.



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