Education & Health
Response

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Striving for Digital Equity

Washington State’s Digital Equity Taskforce for Rapid Broadband Deployment

Chris Walker
Telecommunications Director
According to the WA Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 200,000 to 300,000 of Washington’s students do not have access to broadband internet.
The Digital Equity Taskforce

The DET is comprised of representatives across multiple state agencies and NoaNet in support the rapid analysis of complex data sets to support the increasing need for internet access.

Members serve as subject matter experts and have intimate familiarity with this initiative due to prior involvement in a drive-in wi-fi access project.

The Taskforce will provide recommendations to OSPI after assessing a list of collated data sets. The goal is to serve as many students as equitably as possible with respect to the limited funds allocated for this initiative.
Assessment Methods

The taskforce will assess the location of unserved or underserved student homes compared to known service provider coverage maps, existing infrastructure, possible wireline deployments, hotspot availability, community hubs, and other community-based information.

**Affordability:** The DET will coordinate with known accessibility groups to ensure equitable service access and coverage for as many students as possible.

**Accessibility:** The DET is assessing whether there is only a single location with access challenges or if there are clusters of high-need families in a specific area to determine the best access solution. For example, a single hotspot may serve an individual home but may not have sufficient bandwidth to serve multiple families.
Localized Solutions

Deployable hotspots where cell service exists

Wireless 2.5, 3.5, 5GHz technologies and deployable mini cell towers

Point-to-point microwave

Coordination with service providers on affordable communications plans for students and their families

Additional community hubs, similar to the Drive-In Wi-Fi initiative through public libraries
Smart Region Future Steps

**Economic Development**
- Access to Capital
- Tax Reform
- Natural Resources
- Regulatory Reform
- Global Market
- Infrastructure

**Innovation & Technology**
- Biotechnology
- Sound Science
- Productivity
- Research
- Development

**Workforce**
- Available
- Educated
- Skilled
- Reliable
- Trained

**Quality of Life**
- Educational Opportunities
- Health Services
- Rural Housing
- Community Resiliency
- Infrastructure
Thank you.

Questions?
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Broadband Gap – Silicon Valley

- Exposed, not caused, by SARS-COV-2 and distance learning mandates
- Solution: 4G hotspots
- $20 - $35 per month each plus HW cost
Broadband Gap – Pajaro Valley USD
Looking forward...

• An ongoing challenge...
  – Unlikely to be solved unilaterally by most local governments – excepts would be major cities
  – In my experience, having a local ISP with wireless expertise on the core team enables project progress