

Internet for All in Washington



Description

The Washington State Broadband Office is leading a statewide planning process to develop plans for Internet for All in Washington. The Five-Year Action Plan and the Digital Equity Act Plan will establish the state's eligibility for federal funding from the Biden-Harris administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which delivers significant investments for the expansion of broadband access to help close the digital divide nationwide.

The Internet for All in Washington initiative will create strategies to ensure reliable, high-speed internet across the state of Washington, along with opportunities to invest in digital equity programs to make sure that in addition to internet access, people also have the tools and skillsets necessary to fully take advantage of the benefits that come with digital inclusion.

Purpose and Objective

The purpose of the plans is to help the state prepare to apply for federal funding and start developing strategies to reach the goals of universal access and digital equity across the state.

The objectives are to identify and respond to community broadband and digital equity needs, and to ensure that all communities in Washington State, regardless of access to, or ability to use the internet, are included in the planning process.

Background

Broadband access is essential for everyday activities such as working from home, remote learning, telehealth, staying connected to communities, and social interaction. That is why the Broadband Office strives to improve both the adoption and availability of broadband services for Washington state residents. It is also a Washington state goal to achieve universal high-speed broadband (25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload) access to all businesses and residences by 2024. While broadband access is directly tied to physical infrastructure, digital equity is a crucial element to ensuring citizens benefit fully from access. Achieving digital equity requires a multidimensional inclusive approach to planning to identify and address the largest barriers to access

Understanding Federal Funding

The Biden-Harris Administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provides \$65 billion in funding nationwide for high-speed internet efforts through multiple federal grant programs.

The BIL funnels a high percentage of its funding into broadband infrastructure and digital equity through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program and the Digital Equity Act (DEA) programs. These federal grant programs will provide over \$48 billion across the country for infrastructure deployment, internet installation, digital equity programs, workforce development and training, digital literacy and skills education, and the adoption of high-speed internet to connect Americans with their communities, their democracy, and the economy.

The state of Washington is focusing its efforts in completing the required planning for the BEAD and Digital Equity Act programs. These planning efforts will establish eligibility for federal funds that will deliver results for all who call Washington home. The final amount of total federal funding will be calculated through a formula allocation based on the number of unserved and underserved residences and businesses in the state.

TIMELINE



Internet for All in Washington



How can I share my thoughts?

There will be numerous opportunities to share your thoughts with the state's broadband team. We will have a variety of in-person and virtual events across Washington state. There is also a dedicated website, email, and social media where Washington residents can share comments.

Are there opportunities to engage in-person?

We will have a series of listening sessions across the state. Please sign-up for our email list or check the project website for the most up-to-date information on in-person and virtual events. We will also share flyers and other information with our community partners, including libraries and schools.

What is the timeline that the State Broadband Office is working under?

The State Broadband Office is operating under a federally mandated timeline for submission of the two plans which will secure a historical investment into broadband infrastructure and digital equity efforts. This timeline has a submission of the BEAD Plan in August of 2023, and the Digital Equity Act Plan in November of 2023. We know that conducting an inclusive public engagement process takes time. Our office still strives to develop and implement a truly community-led strategy for engagement. While this engagement period is somewhat limited, we will utilize all possible tools and strategies to create an inclusive, representative process, understanding that this is just one step in the process towards securing Internet for All in Washington.

Resources

- Digital Navigators Programs
- Washington State Drive-In WiFi Hotspots Location Finder
- Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and Lifeline

Find more details on our webpage.

Events

Round two of events:

Clallam County

Tuesday, May 30th
at 3-5PM,
Peninsula College,
481 S Forks Ave,
Forks, WA 98331

Island County

Thursday, June 1st
at 10:30AM-12PM,
Oak Harbor Library,
1000 S.E. Regatta Drive,
Oak Harbor, WA 98277

Snohomish County

Thursday, June 1st
at 5-6:30PM,
Lynnwood Library,
19200 44th Ave W,
Lynnwood, WA 98036

King County

Tuesday, June 6th
at 5-6:30PM,
Burien Library,
400 SW 152nd St STE 100,
Burien, WA 98166

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



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