2022 Digital Equity Forum Work Plan

June 2022

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Digital Equity Forum Work Plan.

This work plan serves as the living document that provides a common understanding of the goals for the Digital Equity Forum through 2022, outlining the timeline and key milestones, the group's mission, vision and values, as well as working definitions that will help the group move forward with developing recommendations for the Legislature by December 31, 2022.

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

The mission of the Digital Equity Forum is to develop recommendations to advance digital connectivity in Washington state. In developing its recommendations, the forum must:

- Develop goals that are consistent with the goals of the governor's statewide broadband office, as provided in RCW 43.330.536
  - By 2024: 25/3 megabits per second (Mbps) scalable
  - By 2026: 1/1 gigabit per second (Gbps) all anchor institutions
  - By 2028: 150/150 Mbps all residents and businesses
- Strengthen public-private partnerships
- Solicit public input through public hearings or informational sessions
- Work to increase collaboration and communication between local, state, and federal governments and agencies
- Recommend reforms to universal service mechanisms.

Vision

Everyone in Washington has affordable broadband internet technology as well as the tools and skills needed to participate in our digital society before 2028.

Values

The Digital Equity Forum provides recommendations that:

- Center community voice.
- Develop, strengthen, or support policies, programs and procedures that prioritize resources to people who experience the effects of past and current marginalization.
- Eliminate barriers that have been deeply entrenched in systems of inequality and oppression.
- Promote dignity, honor, and respect for all people.
- Ensure economic viability of both urban and rural communities in Washington state.
- Support the needs for all who call Washington home.

- Address access to affordable, reliable, redundant and scalable/future-proof broadband technologies to engage in essential services.
- Promote values in systems that sustain equity, not just systems that provide equity in the moment.
- Prioritize education and life-long learning through the addressing of digital inequities.
- Consider online safety and security and the costs that anchor institutions like schools, libraries and healthcare must bear.
- Recognize that just because a service may be available, it may not mean that everyone has the ability to access it.

In the 2021-23 biennial operating budget, the state Legislature provided one-time funding to the Washington State Broadband Office to convene a Digital Equity Forum in partnership with the Washington State Office of Equity to develop recommendations for the Legislature to advance digital equity in Washington state. The forum includes representation by tribal governments, state agencies, and underserved and unserved communities, including historically disadvantaged communities.

Purpose

The purpose of the Digital Equity Forum is to identify opportunities to advance digital connectivity for underserved and unserved communities, including historically disadvantaged communities throughout Washington state. In developing its recommendations, the Forum has the opportunity to define for the first time what digital equity is for Washington state. The work of the Digital Equity Forum will provide a preliminary analysis of current initiatives and programs, technologies, gaps in services or access, and best practices for implementing equitable outcomes. Recommendations developed by the Forum may be used for strategic planning purposes at the state level. This charter will serve as the governing document that outlines the responsibilities, membership and outcomes of the Digital Equity Forum.

Key Definitions

The fields of broadband infrastructure and digital equity are emerging and definitions for commonly used terms are constantly evolving. Some useful definitions are provided below. As the body of knowledge continues to grow, the Digital Equity Forum may wish to revisit definitions to reflect a common understanding as it pertains to Washington state.

Broadband or Broadband Service: "Broadband" or "broadband service" means any service providing advanced telecommunications capability and internet access with transmission

speeds that, at a minimum, provide twenty-five megabits per second download and three megabits per second upload.[1]

Broadband Equity: Broadband equity is achieved when all people and communities are able to access and use affordable, high-speed, reliable internet that meets their long-term needs.[2]

Community Anchor Institution: The term "community anchor institution" means an entity such as a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization, or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including low-income, unemployed individuals, and aged individuals.[3]

Digital Equity: Digital Equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.[4]

Digital Inclusion: Digital Inclusion is the act of bridging the digital divide by ensuring that all individuals and communities have access to digital tools and technology and the skills to use them effectively. [5]

Digital Literacy: Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.[6]

Middle Mile Infrastructure: Middle mile infrastructure broadly refers to the mid-section of internet infrastructure that carries large amounts of data at high speeds over long distances. Local networks are important for bringing high-speed internet to communities. But local networks aren't enough. They need to connect to robust, high-capacity national and regional networks. Middle mile infrastructure makes this possible. By connecting to major networks, local networks can ensure reliable high-speed internet service for even the most remote communities.[7]

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[1] RCW 43.330.530

[2] National Digital Inclusion Alliance, https://www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions/

[3] H.R.3684 - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

[4] National Digital Inclusion Alliance, https://www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions/

[5] National Digital Inclusion Alliance, https://www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions/

[6] American Library Association, https://literacy.ala.org/digital-literacy/

[7] NTIA, Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program, https://www.internetforall.gov/program/enabling-middle-mile-broadband-infrastructure-program

Unserved Communities: "Unserved areas" means areas of Washington in which households and businesses lack access to broadband service, as defined by the office, except that the state's definition for broadband service may not be actual speeds less than twenty-five megabits per second download and three megabits per second upload.[8]

Underserved Location: The term ``underserved location'' means a location--(i) that is not an unserved location; and (ii) as determined in accordance with the broadband DATA maps, lacks access to reliable broadband service offered with-- (I) a speed of not less than-- (aa) 100 megabits per second for downloads; and (bb) 20 megabits per second for uploads; and (II) a latency sufficient to support real-time, interactive applications.[9]

Underserved Population: "Underserved population" means any of the following: (a) Individuals who live in low-income households; (b) Aging individuals; (c) Incarcerated individuals; (d) Veterans; (e) Individuals with disabilities; (f) Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners or who have low levels of literacy; (g) Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; (h) Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area; (i) Children and youth in foster care; or (j) Individuals experiencing housing instability.[10]

Universal Service: "Universal service" is the term historically used to describe government efforts to ensure all citizens have access to telephone service regardless of location. In the age of the internet, digital technology, and cloud computing, policymakers have shifted their focus from supporting traditional phone service (voice service) to universal broadband service to combat the "digital divide."[11]

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[8] RCW 43.330.530

[9] H.R.3684 - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

[10] E2HSB 1723, 1723-S2.E.pdf (wa.gov)

[11] Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, Revising Washington's Universal Communications Services Program: Preliminary Report, December 31, 2018.

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Timeline and Milestones

Milestone	Date
Digital Equity Forum At-Large Meeting #1 • Project kickoff	December 9
Small Group Workshop Option A	February 24 2:00 – 4:00 pm
Small Group Workshop Option B	March 24 2:00 – 4:00 pm
Listening Session #1	March 29 5:00 – 6:30 pm
Listening Session #2	March 30 12:00 noon – 1:30 pm
Digital Equity Forum At-Large Meeting #2 • Work Plan – Values-based decision framework • Work Plan - Mission, vision, and values • Work Plan- Key definitions	April 7, 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Listening Session #3	May 10 5:00 – 6:30 pm
Listening Session #4	May 11 12:00 noon – 1:30 pm
Digital Equity Forum At-Large Meeting #3 • Interim report • Listening session findings	June 9, 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Small Group Recommendations Development Workshop Group A #1 • Recommendation development	July 14, 1:00 – 3:30 pm
Small Group Recommendations Development Workshop Group B #1 • Recommendation development	July 20, 1:00 – 3:30 pm
Small Group Recommendations Development Workshop Group A #2 • Recommendation refinement	August 10, 1:00 – 3:30 pm
Small Group Recommendations Development Workshop Group B #2 • Recommendation refinement	August 17, 1:00 – 3:30 pm

Digital Equity Forum At-Large Meeting #4 • Draft recommendations	September 15, 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Digital Equity Forum At-Large Meeting #5 • Finalize recommendations consensus and approval • Acknowledgements and gratitude	October 20, 1:00 – 4:00 pm
WSBO and Office of Equity write final report and transmit to the Legislature.	October 20 – January 1, 2023

Deliverables

The Digital Equity Forum as established as part of the 21-23 budget process requires the Forum to develop recommendations to advance digital connectivity. These recommendations will be transmitted to the Legislature by January 1, 2023. In developing these recommendations, the Forum must:

- Develop goals that are consistent with the goals of the governor's statewide broadband office, as provided in RCW 43.330.536;
- Strengthen public-private partnerships;
- Solicit public input through public hearings or informational sessions;
- Work to increase collaboration and communication between local, state, and federal governments and agencies; and
- Recommend reforms to universal service mechanisms.

Membership

Members of the Forum are to be appointed by the directors of the Washington State Broadband Office and the Washington State Office of Equity and appointments require the approval of both directors. In making appointments, the directors must prioritize appointees representing:

- Federally recognized tribes;
- State agencies involved in digital equity; and
- Underserved and unserved communities, including historically disadvantaged communities.

In addition to members appointed by the directors, four legislators may serve on the Forum in an ex officio capacity. Legislative participants must be appointed as follows:

- The speaker of the house of representatives must appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives; and
- The president of the senate must appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

Additional members may be added if there is attrition and at the discretion of the directors. A list of current members may be found on the project website.

Roles and Responsibilities

Co-chairs
The co-chairs of the Forum provide leadership and are responsible for establishing the meeting objectives and agenda, while providing the vision and guidance to ensure that progress is being made.

Staff
Staff are provided by the State Broadband Office and are responsible for Forum project management, communications, and meeting logistics.

Consultants
The Forum has the Athena Group on contract to facilitate meetings and public engagement and to record meeting minutes.

Members
Members are responsible for attending 5-6 meetings through fall of 2022 and for bringing their voice to the table as the Forum develops recommendations that advance digital equity.

Procedures

Meetings
The Forum will meet at least five times, or more frequently if necessary, to complete its work. Meetings will be open to the public and will accommodate auxiliary aids for persons with disabilities when requested in advance. Due to the statewide emergency related to COVID-19 meetings are planned to be held virtually. If in-person meetings become possible, they will be held in an ADA-accessible location. The time and location will be updated on this project website.

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Attendance

Forum members are expected to consistently attend meetings. Staff will provide a meeting agenda prior to any scheduled meeting. If a member is unable to attend a Forum meeting, the member must notify staff in advance and provide the name of the designated alternate if one is desired.

Community Agreements

- Listen with curiosity and willingness to learn.
- Do what you need to show up fully.
- Resist the desire to interrupt.
- Speak from your own story and use "I" statements.
- Avoid speaking for another individual or group.
- Be open to the wisdom in each person's story.
- Not everything will be comfortable to discuss.
- Prioritize impact over intent.
- Listen. Reflect. Apologize. Do better.
- Recognize, respect, adapt, and be inclusive to our differences in technology access, comforts, and communication practices.
- Honor accessible meeting practices.

Public Comment

Meeting agendas will include an opportunity for members of the public to provide comment on the material discussed in the meeting agenda. The co-chairs may set and monitor time limits during any public comment period. Public comments may also be submitted to the Forum in writing outside of meeting activities by emailing digitalequity@commerce.wa.gov.

Meeting Minutes

Forum meetings will be summarized via written meeting summaries. These meeting summaries will be made available to the public on the project website.

Decision-making

We will utilize a values-based decision-making process for recommendations. We will evaluate each recommendation co-created by the Digital Equity Forum to ensure that final recommendations align with the values that have guided this project.

Authorizing Statute

The Digital Equity Forum is authorized in law by ESSB 5092 Sec. 129 (70)(a).

Contact

Questions regarding the Digital Equity Forum or this charter may be directed to:

- Karen A. Johnson PhD, Director, Washington State Office of Equity (360-480-7453), karen.johnson@equity.wa.gov.
  Mark Vasconi, Director, Washington State Broadband Office (360-725-2972), mark.vasconi@commerce.wa.gov.