



PRINCE WILLIAM
COUNTY

9-D

Universal Broadband and Technology Inclusion

A Higher Call



Response to BOCS Directive

- The BOCS issued Directive 20-55 on July 21, 2020
- Staff was directed to investigate and propose ideas and/or solutions to provide fast and reliable broadband internet access in rural areas of the County

Broadband Gaps – Current Situation



- Market economics do not work well for investing in broadband infrastructure. This leaves some residents without options, and unable to obtain broadband service.
 - Too sparsely populated
 - Too little existing infrastructure
 - Franchise agreements are limited to Cable TV
 - Federal Government FCC getting back into the issue with Rural Digital Opportunities Fund (RDOF)
 - Differing definitions of what is “unserved”
 - Need for improved maps of broadband service gaps
- Opportunities: There is no magic bullet, but we can string together a series of strategies to address it.
 - Federal and state grant funds to invest in public-private partnership
 - Linkage to FCC and RDOF
 - State of Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI)
 - Governor’s Broadband Advisor actively working on broadband
 - Partnership with Congressman Wittman’s office
 - Partnerships with Internet providers, and power companies
 - Federal E-rate for schools and libraries
 - Economic development funding may also be available to target underserved areas.

Recent Efforts and Developments



- Awarded a consulting contract for Broadband planning and Strategy from private industry.
- Cable Franchise Agreement: Two instances of assisting neighborhoods with new services from Verizon.
- Wi-Fi enhancement to extend Wi-Fi signals across Parking lots of our Public Libraries.
- Reviewed VATI opportunities for potential benefits.
- County Government and PWCS are providing Broadband sticks.
- Upgrade of Schools internet throughput speed. MOU with PWCS enables us to share some of our IT Modernization & Cloud Colocation Center capabilities with our colleagues in PWCS IT.
- Network Expansion in Public Libraries via Federal E-Rate program. (E-Rate funds paid for enhanced Wi-Fi and network services at Libraries).

The **FCC's E-Rate program** makes telecommunications and information services more affordable for schools and libraries. With funding from the Universal Service Fund, E-Rate provides discounts for telecommunications, Internet access, and internal connections to eligible schools and libraries.

A Higher Call

A **Technology Inclusion Initiative** will deliver **focus, commitment,** and 360 degrees of **attention** in pursuit of all desired outcomes of **Universal Broadband**.

Technology Inclusion, while defining a larger goal, forces us to attack the connectivity gap first.

Service availability is only part of what must be a larger recipe for our County to enjoy sustainable, equitable, and affordable technology outcomes for residents and business.

Plans for Success

Meeting the goals of a **Connected Community** requires us to also look beyond the supply side of Broadband with a deliberate program to actively deliver the community outcomes whose genesis is the basic desire to fix broadband service gaps.

- Broadband **Access** is an issue.
- Broadband **Affordability** is an issue.
- Broadband **Literacy** is an issue.

The Technology Inclusion Initiative is a prospective **program** to address all three issues in pursuit of technology inclusion.

We are not simply looking to meet people where they are. We want to meet them at a point of potential: Technology Inclusion.

Start With Broadband...

Perform an assessment using a specialty broadband/telecom consulting firm to help us examine our case and our options.

1. **Hire a partner.** Validate and Verify current state and conduct planning sessions.
2. Pursue opportunities in our **Cable Franchise Agreement** negotiations with Comcast & Verizon. Creative renegotiation with intent to increase broadband availability from In-Kind contributions in the agreement.
3. Look **at Federal and State programs** along with other options (Middle Mile and Last Mile programs).
4. Research **5G deployment schedules** with Telecom Industry and assess viability to impact service gaps (how could our infrastructure help)?
5. Investigate “**Dig Once**” policies/opportunities to save money and time on infrastructure expansion.
6. Look **for Public Private Partnerships** in two industries in particular:
 1. Telecom – (Examples: CenturyLink, Zayo, SummitIG, etc...)
 2. Power Providers – (Examples: Dominion, NOVEC)

A new Program



DoIT is creating a new program called the **Technology Inclusion Initiative**.

With regular reports to the Board and Executive Leadership, we will offer full attention, continuous focus, and an ongoing conversation about Technology Inclusion options and efforts in our Prince William County community.

Partnerships with the IT and Telecom Industries, State Government, County Governments, Libraries, Anchor Institutions, Schools, Legislative, and Federal Associates... Are keys to success.

As we continue to work on this, we are excited to see the Governor's announcement, and we are taking a closer look at this now. We are also closely watching the potential legislation at the state and federal levels, including additional support for the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative.

Discussion and Question

