**Whitman County Broadband Action Team**

*Monthly Meeting (2nd Monday, 3-4pm)*

**Purpose:** Collaborative, working group established to expand broadband service in Whitman county, communicate with county stakeholders about broadband needs and opportunities, and enhance and facilitate broadband use to improve quality of life for all who live in and visit Whitman County.

**Members:** Port of Whitman County (Kara Riebold, Kalvin Johnson), Avista Utilities (Paul Kimmell), Whitman County Rural Library District (Cody Allen), Partners for Rural WA-Eastern Region (Jody Opheim)

**Agenda & Notes**

**September 12, 2022**

**1. Meeting dates**

Does the second Monday work?

***The second Monday of the month from 3-4pm works for everyone.***

**2. Membership**

Do we invite additional members?

***Cody will reach out to Neill and invite them to have a representative attend the meetings.***

***Jody will reach out to Janet Schmidt (WSU Extension) to ensure she is aware of the county’s BAT activities. We will invite other attendees as needed – for instance, we might invite all ISPs and ILECs that serve the county to talk about their infrastructure plans, participation in ACP, etc. We could also use a monthly meeting to focus on how we might help specific sectors (such as mental health, public safety, workforce development) and invite appropriate representatives to attend.***

**3. Communications**

How do we keep stakeholders informed? Schools, mayors, as well as social services like Palouse River Counseling, CAC, CoA? Who and how (web page content – members, purpose, activities, grants applied for, speed test link, broadband related news, link to Tech Connect help desk, etc.)?

***The group opted to have a web page with useful information such as agendas, meeting notes, resources, etc., and we will push that URL to the public (radio, print, library branches) to get people in the habit of checking the site rather than doing any newsletters or printed documents on a regular basis. Kalvin will tentatively plan to have a web page preview at the October meeting.***

**4. Develop a dynamic plan**

Broadband Adoption Plan

***The group will draft a short, dynamic broadband plan that is updated as information becomes available and work is completed on infrastructure throughout the county.***

5. **Infrastructure**

Where do we still have coverage gaps in the county? How do we fix them with all the funding opportunities coming over the next 12 months?

***Kara and Kalvin will begin mapping polygons of coverage areas so we can see what areas in the county have some level of coverage vs. no coverage, and what areas need improved coverage. Talk with electric utility providers to obtain information enabling us to map population clusters and individual residences for this purpose. We can then develop an application strategy for the SBO NOFO expected in November and schedule a monthly meeting with ISPs and ILECs to discuss ways we can fill the gaps.***

**6. Potential Projects**

**a. Digital Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**

**b. Affordability – ACP toolkit**

**b. Workforce Development (Porch Light certification for communities, AWB remote**

**online cert)**

c. Economic Development (Mashup Labs course for would-be entrepreneurs)

d. Healthcare (online mental health services – PRC has an 8 mo backlog)

e. Agriculture

f. Education

g. Social Services

h. Local governments

i. Devices

j. Public Safety

***We will focus on the first three in the list, especially if the pending Digital Navigator application is funded by the State Broadband Office as it will provide significant funding for the WCL to address DEI and affordability. Jody will reach out to Jessica Meyers at Porch Light to see if the community certification process is finalized (certification for remote worker-friendly communities).***

***General Discussion:***

***The Whitman County BAT will also respond to the SBO’s call for comments regarding their round 2 funding NOFO expected in November as there are concerns about open access and rural input about the NOFO requirements (Jody will submit a response).***

***The BAT should create and maintain a list of all ISPs and ILECs in the operating in the county.***

***The BAT should prepare for future funding opportunities (especially the BEAD program launching in the last half of 2023) by creating a plan that includes the overall broadband-related needs of the county, plans for improvement, and a prioritized project list for infrastructure projects as well as digital equity and inclusion projects and community/economic development project related to broadband. The BAT will also look for ways/partners to leverage funding.***

***The BAT will also watch legislative developments that pertain to the above activities and advocate for the county when necessary and helpful.***

***NEXT MEETING IS OCTOBER 10***