

MEETING NOTES



Broadband Outreach & Utilization Strategic Planning Project

Economic Development Sector

January 16, 2013

IN ATTENDANCE: Amanda Hoey, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD); Joan Silver, Wasco County Economic Development Commission; Carrie Pipinich, MCEDD; Andrea Klaas, Port of The Dalles; Mary Kramer, Wasco County Economic Community; Mike Canon, Klickitat County Economic Development; Frank J. Kay III, City of Maupin; Jeff Davis, Wasco Electric Cooperative; Mary Merrill, Columbia Gorge Community College; Donella Polehn, Polehn Farms Inc; Keith Mobley, QLife Network.

MEETING PURPOSE

To identify:

- The role broadband availability, adoption and utilization plays in new business/industry entry and existing business growth and development.
- Obstacles and constraints to using broadband as a means to attract new business/industry, and to expand markets and support growth of existing businesses.
- Assets and opportunities that can be leveraged to support new business/industry attraction and existing business development and growth.
- Potential 3-to-5 year goals toward achieving the necessary level of broadband capabilities.

The discussion convened at 9:00am

Q1 What possibilities do broadband (BB) availability, adoption and utilization present for attracting new businesses and industry, and growing existing businesses? What broadband-dependent business opportunities and innovations are available now or on the horizon? What's at stake if the level of broadband adoption and utilization inhibits those possibilities?

Criticality of BB to small businesses and teleworkers

- The connectivity of BB would enable small business to flourish.
- Quality of life is why people choose Wasco communities but they are prevented from home business or telework due to lack of BB access.
- BB needs to be ubiquitously available to optimize economic development.

Criticality of broadband to the agricultural sector

- Wireless technologies sufficient for agriculture are unavailable. Agricultural uses require a "big/fast pipe" that is "a threshold above the norm."
- Cherry/pear/fruit markets are global. Access to these markets is essential. Unique products-fruit, handmade instruments, made by generations-old businesses could have a worldwide audience.

Consumers need and expect better service and better information

- Consumers need to be served better from the standpoint of access points, accurate device and service information, and ISP service, support and reliability.
- Public sites have access that could be more open, but libraries (e.g. Maupin) are small and expansion requirements are prohibitive.
- Consumers need more accurate device and service info regarding average and time-of-day speeds.
- ISP's don't sufficiently market info or provide reliable service.
- The presence of Q-Life should give Wasco County a cost and capacity advantage, but so far has not.

BB is a significant tool for developing and maintaining the vitality of rural communities.

Young people would be able to remain in rural communities if there are economic opportunities driven by BB.

There is a significant value proposition for BB but the public doesn't fully understand it.

- End users don't connect the dots between what BB can do and the economic value it can deliver. Business users are not up-to-speed on the tools available via BB. (Example referenced: SBDC and Thomas-NET.)
- There is a lack of inspiring examples/knowledge and awareness of the unlimited small businesses possibilities via BB connection to worldwide markets. ...
- Small businesses in areas served by high capacity BB connections are often unaware of how to use BB as a tool to grow their business.

Data is needed to "create the case" for last mile provider entry.

- Data on telecommunications (Global/National/Regional/Local) would inform our communities and potential providers.

Q2: What are the primary constraints or barriers to taking full advantage of the possibilities of broadband as a means of business entry and growth?

BB availability

- Speed/capacity unavailability and/or insufficiency.

Policy – national, state and local

- Rules and regulations, e.g. building codes, make sharing at high capacity sites impractical.
- BB not regarded, today, as a necessary utility, such as Rural Electrification or railroads.

Lack of information on how to use BB tools and take advantage of BB opportunities

- Lack of savvy among small businesses about utilization resources e.g. the SBDC.
- Lack of "inspiring" examples of entrepreneurship potential of the web.
- BB service that IS available is not well communicated with regard to its functional/strategic benefits or technical information on HOW to use it.

Data

- Lack of data about degree of latent demand in rural communities.
- We don't know where we compare as a state or region re BB, and so are not sure what we can expect or should advocate for.

Urban/rural divide

- Cultural divide between rural and more urban communities makes partnering unlikely.

Business recruitment barriers

- Lack of info on fiber location, price, no redundancy, no ability for CenturyLink partnerships.

Q3 What community assets or other opportunities can be leveraged to overcome barriers?

Partnerships

- Most likely partnerships are between The Dalles and Klickitat County because they are-already partnering on major assets, e.g. airport. The Gorge Technology Alliance and agriculture groups are great resources as well.
- - Collaboration with Klickitat County gives The Dalles a market area of about 60,000 – 70,000. Pilot projects, for instance a partnership between QLife and Polehn Farms for global marketing.
- The Dalles and Hood River could possibly partner to seek grants.
- Providers, local government, business, PUD, schools, libraries, are willing to sit down together, and are well positioned to leverage other efforts in the region.

Data

- Quantification of latent demand.

Outreach, Information & Marketing

- Broadly disseminate information on the support services available.
- Orchardists can connect with markets overseas when they are informed about the opportunity.
- Marketing telecommuting, opportunities to large corps.
- Marketing through local business organizations.

Providers

- More demanding ISP contract requirements.
- Providers can be a real resource, e.g. staff can be trained to be resources for information and support.
- Retailers (device and service) encouraged to provide more info to help customers understand what BB speed they need to meet their expectations and needs.

Access Opportunities

- Create hubs: High capacity sites/hubs accessible in The Dalles and in rural communities.
 - Create telecommuting options for environmental groups and recreation companies operating in Maupin.
 - Hubs could include amenities e.g. coffee shop, office cubicles.
- Libraries are already serving as hubs and can be further leveraged:
 - Example in Hood River: Gorge Innoventure, an entrepreneurial hub/Business “start-up boot camp.”
- New models like metered service might address affordability.

Policy

- Motivate our national and state leadership to view BB as an essential service.

Grant Opportunities

- Establish partnerships to create micro funding or matching grants.
- Grants could be available through the Investment Board, the National Scenic Act, Google, etc.

Q4 What broadband adoption and utilization goals should be established in the near and mid-range future? Which assets and opportunities have the potential to contribute the most “lift” to those goals?

*Note: **x** indicates the response of each individual group member.*

<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Lift potential</i>	<i>Goal</i>
ASAP	x x	Stimulate state/federal action via advocacy for rural BB deployment with state and national policymakers.
As opportunity arises		Obtain federal funding based on our history of success..
Year One	x x x x	An educated community of potential users county wide informed about value and potential.
	x x	First hub built of a one hub per year strategy (Hubs in Maupin, Dufur, Tygh Valley.)
		Contracts with local providers optimized for quality of service standards.
		A user/provider group that gathers quarterly/half yearly to keep current on needs/opportunities and problem solve/policy frame. Could be regional / bi-state.
		Local latent demand quantified.
Mid-long term	x x x x	World class opportunities created for businesses to remain here and locate here.
Long term	x	BB connectivity to rural homes.