CONNECT ROCKINGHAM

Rockingham County's collective planning and funding approach to digital equity.

MOMENTUM
NCACC 116TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
AUGUST 24-26 WAKE COUNTY

Better Together.

We are seeking to tackle challenges to broadband access, affordability and adoption within Rockingham County - the scale and complexity is much bigger than any one organization.

Involved 27 agencies in the process.

MOMENTUM
NCACC 116TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
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Leading Outcomes

- Countywide Digital Inclusion Plan
- Ongoing meetings to prioritize efforts
- Collaborative Broadband Infrastructure Funding
- Well-positioned for affordability/adoption funding

ECT ROCKINGHAM COUNTY
Inclusion Plan
ss Report
ry 2023

DRAFT

PROJECT STATUS COLOR MAP

Achieved	Maintain	In Process	Not Started	Other

★ Indicates coalition's priority for future grant funding.

AND OBJECTIVES	
ILITY: Physical broadband infrastructure, including all supporting technology needed to deliver Internet service.	
mprove Maps, Strategy 1.1: Encourage residents and local officials to contact legislative representatives to request r additions to the laws that will improve broadband infrastructure mapping.	
A: Create policies mandating that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) provide NCDIT with current and planned y by street and address.	In Process
B: Dedicate Federal and State funds to broadband projects to collect information from individual households esses regarding the availability and speed of internet connections.	In Process
mprove Maps, Strategy 1.2: Maximize the efforts of Rockingham County Information Technology to create complete g new and existing information.	
A: Build upon ISP relationships to expand mapping of current coverage, gaps, and plans for expansion.	In Process
B: Consolidate maps for greater understanding of issues regarding availability versus access deficiencies.	
C: Dedicate Federal, State, and Local funds to collect information from individual households and business the availability and speed of internet connections.	
ncrease Connectivity, Strategy 2.1: Dedicate State and Federal funds to expand broadband access.	
A: Increase the number of grant applications to connect eligible areas of the County, including cities and unty government should assist in GREAT grant applications; cities and towns should capitalize upon d downtown designations to seek grants to fund public Wi-Fi networks in those areas.	Not Started
B: Work with County and local governments to develop an RFP to determine the scope of need for future d projects.	In Process
mprove Connectivity, Strategy 3.1: Encourage residents and local officials to contact legislative representatives and anges or additions to the laws that hinder fiber-based broadband expansion.	
A: Create or change laws to allow use of existing dark fiber and government fiber infrastructure construction l in areas where internet service providers will not invest in improvements.	???
B: Create or change laws to provide for more competition in the broadband market among ISPs.	
mprove Connectivity, Strategy 3.2: Regionalize the effort to increase availability to leverage more funds to create for internet service providers to expand fiber infrastructure. (MAY WANT TO REVISIT GOAL FOR FEASIBILITY).	
A: Piedmont Triad Regional Council should capitalize on its relationships with municipal officials to e regionwide efforts at broadband expansion.	In Process
Focus on where internet connectivity may be available, but barriers exist to keep that keep them from accessing it.	
Expand Wireless Access, Strategy 4.1: Complete a community scan of private businesses, churches, and community-anizations that provide free Wi-Fi network access. Use GIS mapping to overlay public and private access maps.	
A: Collect internet access data from private businesses and community-based organizations and submit to am County's Broadband Initiatives Team for mapping.	Maintain
B: Make maps easily accessible to the community through County, municipal, and Coalition member websites.	Not Started
xpand Wireless Access, Strategy 4.2: Within five years, increase the areas that have no-cost Wi-Fi network availability, im of no-cost free public or private access points within no more than 10 miles of each Rockingham County residence.	
A: Enable Wi-Fi access in government buildings where feasible. Update: Public/Private networks for security.	In Process
B: Enable Wi-Fi access in all community and neighborhood parks by installing weather protected routers at ties that would expand access to parking lots and picnic areas. List of recommend parks in full report.	
C: Enable Wi-Fi access development in churches, income-based housing, and community based organization Funding will be needed. Pilot: Federal HUD's Connect Home USA and Neighborhood Works Program.	
D: Equip public and medical transportation options with Wi-Fi access (school busses, RCATS, Pelham)	
E: Fund infrastructure needs like sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and public transportation to decrease barriers to opportunities (long-term objective).	

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CONNECT ROCKINGHAM COUNTY
Digital Inclusion Plan
Progress Report
February 2023

PROJECT STATUS COLOR MAP

Achieved	Maintain	In Process	Not Started	Other

Goal #4: Expand Wireless Access, Strategy 4.3: Establish a countywide Broadband Resource Education Center.	
★ Objective A: Identify and equip a facility in an accessible location that can serve as an advocacy/implementation hub for home and public broadband access, affordable personal devices and services, and local technology training and support programs (i.e., Digital Navigators).	Not Started
Goal #5: Increase access to low-cost or no-cost broadband, Strategy 5.1: Address gaps in unlimited bandwidth hotspot funding as well as connectivity for students residing in areas where hotspots are ineffective.	
★ Objective A: Explore funding options to sustain unlimited bandwidth hotspots for all school students in need of the service beyond the FY2022 school year.	TBD
★ Objective B: Reduce connectivity barriers for e-learning or students in quarantine in areas unable to connect through hotspots.	
Goal #5: Increase access to low-cost or no-cost broadband, Strategy 5.2: Increase enrollment in established programs (i.e., Affordability Connectivity Program, provider plans) that give broadband stipends, scholarships, or subsidies.	
★ Objective A: Explore opportunities to implement assistance programs (similar to utility assistance programs) through the Department of Social Services or community-based organizations serving Rockingham County.	In Process
Objective B: Utilize local networks, marketing departments within participating organizations to increase community awareness of no-cost or reduced internet service.	
Goal #6: Increase Device Ownership, Strategy 6.1: Utilize current education programs (Pre-K- Community College) to increase device distribution.	
★ Objective A: Eliminate or minimize Chromebook insurance costs for students enrolled in Rockingham County schools (average cost = $30.00 per device).	TBD
Objective B: Increase the number of devices available to enrolled students through Rockingham Community College's device loaner program.	
Objective C: Establish a device/equipment lending program through the County library system.	
Objective D: Secure funding to reopen the financial assistance application process for students at RCC needing scholarships to purchase internet service plans (including installation costs).	
Goal #6: Increase Device Ownership, Strategy 6.2: Expand device ownership within the community.	
★ Objective A: Develop and sustain a refurbishing program with an identified lead organization (long-term objective)	Not Started
Objective B: Explore a Device Refurbishment curriculum with Rockingham Community College and RCS Career and Technical Education (funding would be needed until an ADM funding stream is established.	TBD
2 Objective C: Provide funding for programs that provide computer devices to community members.	In Process
ADOPTION: Digital literacy, awareness of access options, engaging community leaders to share resources locally.	
Priority Needs: 1. Create and communicate resources for outreach about current internet access areas. 2. Fill the gaps of who else is supplying information technology assistance and education and address gaps uncovered by outreach in the community. 3. Build consensus on navigation/inclusion definitions between the community and resource providers; set baseline measures.	
★ Objective A: Connecting digital literacy training with relevant content and services through direct outreach where people are meeting already, as well as creating space for focus groups and listening sessions.	TBD
Objective B: Running more public access computing centers across Rockingham County.	Not Started
Objective C: Exploration of secondary and post-secondary curriculum and certifications in Digital Literacy and Navigation. Potential for a Digital Navigator support network that would help develop relationships with community members, as well as the exploration of a government sponsored staff position to expand and support digital literacy training and promotion.	
Objective D: Leverage local non-profits, grassroots organizations, and faith based organizations within Rockingham County to support County efforts. These groups can be leveraged to gain access to under-connected, underserved, and low-wealth residents.	TBD
Objective E: Work with retail and corporate entities to provide funding for hardware, software, reduced cost services, EBB, as well as establishing public/private partnership.	

Strategy Examples

- Increase connectivity, expand infrastructure;
- Connecting individuals with digital literacy training and devices where they already gather (i.e., churches, libraries, etc.);
- Increase access to low-cost or no-cost broadband.