

communities • connect • network

connecting communities with opportunities through technology

Communities Connect Network (CCN) is a statewide coalition of public and private organizations working to ensure that Washington state is a leader in “digital inclusion” – the movement to ensure that all individuals have access and the skills to use the Internet and information technologies.

Challenge: Too many Washingtonians are unequipped to succeed in our 21st century economy

It's simple – those with greater access to the Internet and information technologies are better equipped to access quality educational and career opportunities, better health care and information, and generally greater success in 21st century life. Residents who have access and knowledge to use technology are able to participate more fully in their communities, schools, and government (see box below).

Unfortunately, **in Washington state we are far from having equitable access to the benefits of technology for all residents.** While Washington ranks first in the nation for high-

tech workers' wages and sixth in percentage of residents with broadband in the home, 85% of Washington households earning less than \$15,000 per year have no broadband in the home and 63% have no Internet connection at all (TechPolicyBank). We're a technology-savvy state, yet we are leaving behind Washingtonians with lower-incomes, lower-education, and those living in rural areas. For Washington to secure a bright and fair future, we need to ensure that *all* our residents have equitable access to the education, job, health, and civic tools that information technologies and the Internet provides.

Digital inclusion makes a difference...

- Today, 60% of jobs in the US require skills in technology, and those jobs pay well; people who use computers on the job earn 43% more than those who don't.¹
- 39% of online “health information seekers” ages 15-24 have changed their personal behavior because of health information obtained online.¹
- 94% of youth ages 12-17 who have Internet access at home use the Internet for school research, while 78% believe the Internet helps them with schoolwork.¹
- 45% of Internet users, or about 60 million Americans, say that the Internet helped them make big decisions or negotiate through major life episodes in the previous two years.²

¹ – Children's Partnership, 2006/07

² – Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2006

Solution: Washington's community technology programs give people the skills they need to succeed

Fortunately, hundreds of nonprofit organizations and a number of public agencies across Washington state are working to ensure that residents have access and the skills to use the Internet and information technologies. These community programs are leading the movement to create equitable online opportunity in Washington state. They provide public Internet access, training to build skills, useful content, and online services for all people. However, **ensuring digital inclusion requires effective policy and sufficient investment.** Community technology programs often lack the funding and technical assistance needed to sustain successful programs, let alone improve and expand their services. These programs are training low-income youth, getting GEDs and technology skills to high school dropouts, upgrading the skills of recent immigrants, and working with a host of other residents to bring them towards success in the 21st century. **In order to help create a level playing field for all this state's families, these organizations need Washington to step forward as a digital inclusion leader.**

Learn more about Communities Connect Network:

www.communitiesconnect.org | manager@communitiesconnect.org | (360) 705-2961

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CCN's Vision: Prosperity through information technology

Our vision is that Washington state lives up to its reputation as a global leader in information and communication technologies by making sure our residents have access to and ability to use the wealth of information and opportunity those technologies provide. We believe digital inclusion can help make Washington a place where participation in 21st century jobs, and access to health and education opportunities are possible for all people. If every resident had sufficient access to and ability to use the Internet and information technologies, if they had the digital literacy skills and ability to find and create meaningful online content, then every Washingtonian would have expanded opportunities to learn about and find educational, employment, health, and community engagement opportunities— in short, they'll have a better chance for success in the 21st century.

What we are doing to help

More than 60 community technology providers from across the state joined together to draft and support legislation that created a state-funded grant program. This legislation also provided funding for technical assistance, required the state to create a web-based map of community technology organizations, created regional planning groups to assist underserved communities in obtaining access to high-speed Internet, and created a state definition of "community technology."

CCN has also established the Council on Digital Inclusion (CoDI). Comprised of legislators, industry experts, community technology practitioners and telecommunication providers the Council will develop joint policy initiatives to support digital inclusion across Washington State.

Over the next year, CCN will train additional community technology professionals to educate others about their own work, the needs of the community, and opportunities for digital inclusion partnerships in the workforce, education, financial literacy, economic development, and technology sectors.

CCN's Allies and Partners

Allen Renaissance
Alliance of Technology and Women
Association of Washington Public Hospital Districts
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Century Tel
Cisco
City of Seattle Department of Information Technology
Comcast
Communication Workers of America

Community Voice Mail National Office
Digital Promise
Eastern Washington University - Institute for Public Policy & Economic Analysis
La Casa Hogar
Npower Seattle
Puget Sound Center for Training, Learning and Technology
Radio KDNA
Stone Soup

University of Washington Information School
Verizon Northwest
WA Department of Information Services
WA Department of Social and Human Services
WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Washington State University Extension
Washington Technology Industry Association

-- not a complete list --

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