

## EXPAND BROADBAND ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND ADOPTION

### The Opportunity and Why It's Important

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At a time when broadband communication has proved vital to daily living and the state economy, Oregon is well positioned to make this essential service more available to more Oregonians. Hundreds of millions of federal dollars have been allocated to improve broadband access and adoption for unserved and underserved areas in Oregon. At the same time, private sector firms are constantly investing in facilities to expand and upgrade broadband services. They are by far the largest ongoing source of funding for broadband expansion and innovation. The new public dollars flowing through federal, state, and local programs can be especially valuable if used in conjunction with private investments to close gaps that plague some areas and populations. It is critical that private-public funding be deployed in an overarching strategy – with goals, metrics, and interconnected plans of action – to address three interrelated needs.

- **Access:** putting in place the physical infrastructure to provide households with high-speed internet in every corner of the state.
- **Affordability:** leveraging federal subsidies to those who otherwise would be unable to afford access at the commercial rates typically available.
- **Adoption:** providing community-based technical assistance, equipment, and software, as well as promotion of internet benefits and literacy for those currently unserved or underserved.

### Current Status

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- Appointments and realignment of the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council are complete, along with additional program and project management staffing for the Oregon Broadband Office.
- Agreements between the State of Oregon and federal agencies are complete or in progress, and Oregon's \$782,193 State Digital Equity Planning Grant has been approved by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).
- Regional meetings jointly sponsored by private sector service providers and local governments were held from June through August 2022 to discuss project collaboration and ways to resolve obstacles.

### Recommendations

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- Make broadband deployment a clear priority of the Governor's Office and relevant agencies. Ensure the Oregon Broadband Office is staffed and supported to fulfill its mission relative to federal funding and disbursement.
- In addition, due to the complexity of broadband issues – access, affordability, adoption – create and routinely convene an interagency team to inform and coordinate efforts across agencies and jurisdictions.
- Build out the strategy and work plans to mobilize a strong network of government entities, service providers, individuals, and non-profit and community-based organizations.
- Address such matters as why having and knowing how to use information communication technology is important to a wide range of users for many different purposes.