

Scaling Technology Inclusion in Prince William County



Background

In 2020, The Prince William County Department of Information Technology (DoIT) identified the lack of high-capacity internet access as a critical issue threatening the immediate quality of life and economic survival of residents and local businesses. It also has the potential to diminish the experience of tourists who, according to the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) and the U.S. Travel Association, contributed \$643 Million to the local economy in 2019.

The lack of broadband services in communities (for both residents and businesses) can hinder quality of life for residents, and stifle prospects for new business creation. Additional negative effects include property values, declining real estate demand, and a diminished potential for home-based business opportunities. Finally, broadband service gaps also impede virtual telecommuting, virtual education, telehealth services, and new business creation by restricting access to the technologies and the internet economic forces that drive commercial success, economic vigor, and opportunities for residents and businesses to thrive in the technology economy of the 21st century.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the associated focus on virtual methods of remote learning, remote commerce and remote entertainment has exacerbated and compounded the impacts of broadband service gaps in under-served, unserved, and rural areas of Prince William County.

In response to these issues, and a directive from the Prince William Board of County Supervisors to investigate options for providing fast and reliable broadband internet service in affected areas of the County and to assist in Technology Inclusion for our residents, businesses and visitors, DoIT created the Technology Inclusion Initiative. Our goal is to deliver improved broadband connectivity and performance, supplemental technology education and skills assistance, and affordability relief where it may be needed. The ultimate outcome is to have maximum adoption of technology and to ensure that the positive benefits of technology include all residents, benefits all residents, and enhances the experience of businesses, and visitors of our County.

Creating a Connected Community – Technology Inclusion

DoIT launched the Prince William Technology Inclusion Initiative (TII) in 2020 to help resolve chronic issues of technology access, affordability, and literacy across the County. As a specialized program, TII serves under DOIT as a broadband strategist, advocate, sponsor, public-facing program, community partner, and domain representative for Prince William County.

To structure this initiative, DoIT looked at what other jurisdictions around the country were doing to address digital inclusion in their communities. While there are many best practices and lessons learned to borrow, absent from most of those programs was a true partnership extending across all relevant jurisdictional agencies that leverages the unique knowledge, experience and community connections of each to reach the greatest number of people in target population segments more precisely, efficiently and economically. That's why TII in Prince William County is structured as a multi-agency partnership model.

The Department of Information Technology serves as the lead agency, managing TII, providing technology expertise and supplemental resources including personnel to support our partner agencies. Partner agencies include Prince William Public Libraries, Area Agency on Aging, Community Services, Social Services, Housing & Community Development, Public Schools, Parks & Recreation, Communications, Equity & Inclusion, and Economic Development.

DRAFT

A key tenet of this plan is the belief that delivering high-speed broadband access Countywide isn't enough if residents can't afford it, or might be missing some of the key skills required to thrive in an increasingly digital world. This plan addresses all three of those challenge areas.

Program Priorities and Investments

Service availability is only one aspect of creating sustainable and equitable technology outcomes for residents and businesses. Affordability and technology literacy are also essential elements. Current investment areas include:

Broadband Access

In 2021, Prince William County's Department of Information Technology (DoIT) conducted a detailed, County-wide broadband canvas. This study identified all of the precise locations that are unserved and/or under-served for broadband through direct canvassing and detailed in-person assessments of the county's residential neighborhoods, business zones, and census blocks. This information helped identify all areas of need properly and completely with regard to broadband service gaps.

Since that time, DoIT has expanded the delivery of broadband services to more than 100 homes across the County where services were previously non-existent or not served well enough to support resident's needs.

In 2022, DoIT developed a comprehensive plan for addressing the remaining broadband service gaps. To close gaps in the County, DoIT is working with the telecommunications industry and is awarding partnerships that will direct the locations and specific addresses where broadband services are unavailable. A Request For Proposal (RFP), specific to Broadband Access, was offered publicly for partnership opportunities to address broadband gaps. The Telecom industry responded. An award will occur during the late Summer or early Fall of 2023.

As DoIT finishes the award of the "Access RFP," we will prepare to respond to opportunities in the State of Virginia's Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program and other funding opportunities that can help us achieve our goals.

Affordability

It's not enough to close the last mile for broadband access if residents and businesses cannot afford internet service, or if they lack the devices needed to participate in an increasingly digital world. DoIT will continue to be a strong advocate for increasing competition among internet service providers in the County, and finding ways to help make technology affordable for all community members.

In 2021, DoIT worked in partnership with the Board of County Supervisors and the Office of Communication to promote the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) temporary Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program that helped households struggling to afford internet service or a computer, laptop or tablet during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2023, DoIT applied for and was awarded a \$247,000 competitive grant from the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Outreach Program. The award was accepted July 12, 2023. This program provides low cost to no cost Internet service to eligible households and replaced the EBB program. Prince William County will use the funds to promote the program and help qualifying residents sign up.

DRAFT

DoIT will continuously explore other opportunities, partnerships and more targeted outreach strategies to close the affordability gap.

Technology Literacy

In the Fall of 2021, the Department of Information Technology in partnership with several County agencies launched Digital Prince William – a program offering free technology classes to unserved and underserved County residents and businesses.

Using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, the County sponsored an initial pilot project targeted to older adult residents, and provided 6 hours of beginner-level instruction on iPhone and Android smart phone use. These in-person, beginner-level courses were delivered in November and December of 2021, and were designed to help older adults understand and develop proficiency using some of the key features and functions of their smartphones safely and securely.

The classes were oversubscribed, well-received (based on post-class survey results from participants), and overall, a success. This prompted the County to invest in the Technology Inclusion Initiative to explore even more extensive plans and funds to support free technology learning opportunities for Prince William County residents and businesses.

In late Spring of 2022, the Board of County Supervisors awarded DoIT with a multi-million-dollar investment, from Prince William County's ARPA funds to support the expansion of TII including major investments in technology literacy, affordability, and workforce development programs.

In the second half of 2023, DoIT is standing up a full-scale technology literacy initiative using the [NorthStar](#) platform – a program of Literacy Minnesota that is widely used nationally. The NorthStar curricula is available in English and Spanish. Through Northstar and our TII program, free, beginner level technology classes will be offered in all 12 of Prince William's Public Libraries, the 2 senior centers, the Virtual Senior Center that serves several jurisdictions in the region, and the vocational services center operated by our partner agency; the Department of Community Services. A Mobile Classroom will also enable the County to bring training to other locations in the County. To scale literacy and education programs, DoIT hired its first, fulltime, bilingual Digital Navigator to teach classes and to work with partner agencies to scale the program within our community.

These and other initiatives underway go to the heart of what technology inclusion means to Prince William County:

"We're not simply looking to meet people where they are. We want to meet them at a higher point of potential." --- Rob Mancini, CIO

Summary

Prince William County is aggressively investing in a holistic Technology Inclusion Initiative that positions the County to be among the first in the nation to achieve universal broadband access and adoption. These investments will provide a detailed roadmap essential for effectively competing for funding that may come available, assist in attracting partners and engender confidence in the County's ability to achieve access, affordability and literacy goals. This may be the last chance in a long time for county governments to get it right. Prince William County intends to do just that.

Action Plan & Updates

What follows is DoIT’s action plan for scaling Prince William County’s Technology Inclusion Initiative and tracking priorities and progress. This plan aligns to the County’s fiscal year (July 2022 – June 2024) and is organized around 7 strategies with actions to be completed in phases.

The strategies and action items align with DoIT’s efforts to date, along with best practices developed by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance and the criteria for earning recognition as a Digital Inclusion Trailblazer. This plan is aggressive and includes gaining input and participation from partners, stakeholders and the community to scale the program.

| Strategy I: Build plan and internal infrastructure to support scaling PWC’s Technology Inclusion Initiative (TII) which addresses broadband access, affordability and technology literacy. | |
|--|---|
| Action | Action Items |
| Action 1.1 | <p>Examine County needs, opportunities and best practices in digital inclusion from other jurisdictions to develop an impactful, cost effective and scalable plan for TII.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage lessons learned from 2020/2021 initiatives. Focus on reaching unserved and underserved County residents and businesses. Examine personnel needs; additional community outreach to verify broadband access/access to high-speed broadband; low cost/no cost solutions and outreach; and expanding Digital Prince William literacy program. |
| UPDATE Action 1.1 | <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project, communications and strategy lead (PIO) with prior experience spearheading 2021 TII initiatives began work in May 2022 to address this action item. DoIT became an affiliate of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) in June 2022 – a non-profit that combines grassroots community engagement with technical knowledge, research, and coalition building to advocate on behalf of people working in their communities for digital equity. Based on initial research and recommendations, DoIT will structure and scale TII to address 6 NDIA best practice areas: 1) Staffing; 2) Updating TII plan to include a formalized Action Plan (this document) that will also serve as the staff workplan; 3) Build an internal (existing and expanded) and external coalition of partners; 4) Additional community outreach/research/surveys; 5) Ongoing funding; 6) Affordability programs. |
| Action 1.2 | <p>Update TII Plan to meet NDIA best practice criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan must include strategies to support affordable home broadband access, public computer centers, affordable devices, and digital literacy. Process for developing the plan must include active participation of community stakeholders including communities who are in most need of digital literacy and home broadband Internet subscription. |
| UPDATE Action 1.2 | <p>Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DoIT developed this draft plan in 2022 as a starting point for structuring technology inclusion initiatives. In the Fall of 2023, DoIT will update the plan and begin circulating it with our partner agencies and County leadership. In 2024, DoIT will work with the Office of Equity and Inclusion to solicit active participation from community stakeholders in refining the plan and future year action items. |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <p>Action 1.3</p> | <p>Define staff and resource roles/onboard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm and prioritize program hires. Initial roles include: TII Program Manager and Digital Navigator (bilingual English/Spanish required). • Determine staff augmentation needs. • Confirm resources (internal to DoIT), other agencies and government contacts, and technology partners and define roles for staffing plan. • Define internal and/or outsourced resources needed for developing website and other collateral necessary to support TII. • Use this action plan as the basis for the staff work plan. |
| <p>UPDATE Action 1.3</p> | <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TII Program Manager onboarded in Spring 2023. Role is to provide leadership, oversight and accountability for the success of the TII program by working in close collaboration with the CIO, strategic partners, staff and related resources to support the vision, mission, strategy and actions necessary to build and scale the program. • Bilingual Digital Navigator onboarded in Spring 2023 to support free tech literacy training classes for residents (NorthStar) and ACP application assistance in libraries, senior centers, Dept of Community Services’ vocational services program, regional Virtual Senior Center and mobile classroom. • PIO onboarded in May 2022 continue support as program and communications strategist. • DoIT is using existing staff augmentation contracts to scale support resources and is working with Libraries to leverage their part-time staff for various activities such as ACP outreach. |
| <p>Action 1.4</p> | <p>Identify public, private and in-kind funding streams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track funds that the County has appropriated or grants received to date for TII and other Digital Inclusion initiatives. • Build a database of digital inclusion funding sources that are applicable County-wide including those that are agency-specific. • Work with partner agencies to amplify the County’s ability to secure ongoing funding for digital inclusion priorities at the agency level, County-wide and regionally. |
| <p>UPDATE Action 1.4</p> | <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2020, DoIT and Prince William County Public Schools applied for and received a \$1.2 Million grant through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to buy 4,061 Wi-fi hotspot devices for students in Title 1 County schools where internet service was limited. • Late Spring of 2022, the Board of County Supervisors awarded DoIT with a multi-million-dollar investment, from Prince William County’s ARPA funds to support the expansion of TII. • DoIT applied for and was awarded a competitive grant from the FCC to promote the Affordable Connectivity Program with targeted outreach/in person signup programs. The award was accepted July 12, 2023. • DoIT is tracking additional federal grant programs where funding will flow either directly from the federal government or through the Commonwealth beginning late 2023 and in 2024. |
| <p>Action 1.5</p> | <p>Upgrade NDIA free membership to Affiliate+.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$650 annually includes multiple monthly programming calls with national thought leaders, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | the ability to participate in national working groups. Membership allows for 2 participants. |
| Strategy II: Build and leverage partnerships in the public and private sector to inform the initiative, and help connect residents and businesses with the programs and resources they need. | |
| Action | Action Items |
| Action 2.1 | <p>Reconnect with TII Agency partners and expand agency/government partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current partners include: Area Agency on Aging, Communications, Economic Development, Equity and Inclusion, Parks, Recreation and Tourism, and Prince William County Libraries. • Reach out to include: Adult Detention Center, Community Services, Development Services, Housing & Community Development, Human Resources, Planning & Zoning, Social Services, Virginia Cooperative Extension, PWC School System and VA Star/Spark Foundation. • Explore opportunities to work together. • Establish POCs within each agency/roles. • Share updated plan with partners and request feedback. • Update plan to incorporate feedback. • Work with partners (and BoCS) to solicit community feedback on the updated plan – particularly from unserved and underserved segments. |
| Update | Update: |
| Action 2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency partners now include Area Agency on Aging, Communications, Community Services, Economic Development, Equity and Inclusion, Housing & Community Development, Social Services, Prince William Public Libraries, PWC Schools and others to be brought on board as opportunities develop. |
| Action 2.2 | <p>Bring on initial technology partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verizon, Comcast, Astound, Starlink, Microsoft, Google, Dell, etc. • Explore roles, resources and opportunities. • Identify other potential technology partners including those based in the County. |
| Action 2.3 | <p>Survey county agencies on digital inclusion resources available to the public (or needed) at locations they manage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly available Wi-Fi (inside/outside/both). • Computers, printers, scanners or other technology available onsite for public use. • Existing classrooms with computer workstations where literacy classes can be taught. • Current digital inclusion programs or plans. • Current staff that provide digital inclusion programs/assistance part-time as part of other job duties or full time. • Technology accessibility tools for disabled persons (such as but not limited to JAWS) with staff knowledgeable on use/ability to train. • Technology that can be checked out of the library or other place such as hot spots. |
| UPDATE | Update: |
| Action 2.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prince William Libraries provides free public computer access at all 12 locations, and a program where patrons can checkout Chromebooks and/or hot spots similar to checking out a library book. Patrons must have a library card which is free for residents. Printers, scanners and other technologies are available at most branches. • Prince William senior centers provide free computer access to its members at both locations. |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free Wi-Fi access is available in all County buildings. Libraries, Senior Centers, Community Services Vocational Services group and several Parks & Recreation Facilities have rooms available that are suitable for teaching small classes. |
| Action 2.4 | <p>Identify and bring on community and regional partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partner agencies and BoCS to identify community partners that can help amplify engagement with target segments and actively help shape TII. Examples of community partners include but aren't limited to non-profits, local businesses or business groups, faith-based organizations, higher education institutions, community groups, citizen advocates, etc. that could make valuable contributions to the coalition. Leverage existing working groups that can add digital inclusion to their priorities rather than duplicate expertise centers - i.e., the Office of Equity & Inclusion, Libraries, etc. may have organized groups in place that are perfectly suited to take this on. Examine resiliency issues with PWC non-profits that are particularly applicable to digital inclusion in the County and how the County could help build greater resilience. (leadership, training, connections, funding, etc.) Do an open call for participation for targeted needs. Identify areas of the County that are underrepresented on the coalition and close gaps. Explore partnering with other jurisdictions in the region to deliver programs and services more cost effectively and with greater reach. (Example: Virtual Senior Center) |
| UPDATE Action 2.4 | <p>Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partner strategy to be defined in 2024 Will need community partners such as VA Star, Computer Core and/or others to assist with free or low-cost devices for those who cannot afford – none of PWC's internet providers currently participate in the FCC's ACP low-cost device program. Began discussions with Fairfax County, Arlington County and City of Alexandria in the summer of 2023 on partnership opportunities and the need to ensure that Northern Virginia has a voice in the Commonwealth's Digital Opportunity Plan and subsequent funding strategy. Working together to add to partnership. |
| Action 2.5 | <p>Develop an organizational plan for staff, leadership, committees, etc. to manage the coalition and a 3-year plan to go into effect in summer or fall of 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule and conduct first meeting of the entire coalition (in person or via remote). Schedule meetings for each committee. Leadership meets to synthesize next action items. Share results with the full coalition and solicit feedback. Finalize recommendations and solicit public comments. Adopt and publish final 3-year plan. |
| <p>Strategy III: Scale the Digital Prince William literacy initiative to cost effectively reach a broader audience of unserved or underserved residents and businesses.</p> | |
| Action | Action Items |
| Action 3.1 | <p>Identify established programs that have vetted technology literacy assessment tools and educational curriculum available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine options for use at no cost/low cost, via creative commons or licensing for both in person or online programming. Review free online tech educational tools such as but not limited to those by google and Microsoft and explore opportunities to adapt curriculum to in person classes via creative |

DRAFT

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>commons licensing when applicable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to standup free educational programming in the fall of 2023. • Assess ability to offer classes using existing County resources or if there’s a need for additional staffing/contractor support. |
| <p>UPDATE</p> <p>Action 3.1</p> | <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vetted multiple programs including but not limited to NorthStar, Senior Planet, The Last Mile, ByteBack, etc. and reviewed how multiple jurisdictions deliver free technology classes to support digital equity and inclusion goals. • Adopted NorthStar in 2023 with full rollout in the Fall of 2023. The NorthStar platform is a program of Literacy Minnesota that is widely used nationally. It is designed to be used in a classroom environment or via self-directed learning from home. The NorthStar curricula is available in English and Spanish. Free beginner level technology classes will be offered in all 12 of Prince William’s Public Libraries, the 2 senior centers, the Virtual Senior Center that serves several jurisdictions in the region, the vocational services center operated by the Department of Community Services and via a Mobile Classroom that will enable the County to bring training to other locations in the County. • DoIT hired its first, fulltime, Digital Navigator to teach these classes in English and Spanish and will assess any additional staffing needs in 2024. |
| <p>Action 3.2</p> | <p>Prioritize standing up programs with agency partners where existing infrastructure (facilities, computers, staffing, programs, etc.) can be leveraged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries, schools, area agency on aging, social services, econ/dev, homeless services, parks, etc. • Identify and source additional resource requirements (equipment, training, staffing, etc.) |
| <p>UPDATE</p> <p>Action 3.2</p> | <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NorthStar to be stood up in all 12 Prince William Public Libraries, both senior centers, vocational services classroom for Community Services, Virtual Senior Center (regional), and mobile classroom. • Most ACP in person enrollment events will take place in partner facilities across the County. • Libraries will provide part-time staffing resources to support ACP enrollment events. • Partnership with Prince William Public Schools to get ACP outreach materials into the hands of every family who has a child enrolled in a community eligibility provision school (school lunch program in low-income areas) • Partnership with social services for direct mail outreach to nearly 15,000 SNAP eligible households in the County. • ACP Posters and flyers available in all County facilities that residents frequent. |
| <p>Action 3.3</p> | <p>Build a follow up program to stay connected to Digital Prince William participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine best way to track progress for participants learning journey and encourage continued learning – email, phone calls, etc. • Leverage econ/dev’s Elevate program to connect participants to advanced skills training. |
| <p>UPDATE</p> <p>Action 3.3</p> | <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing up in fall 2023. |
| <p>Strategy IV: Increase awareness, adoption and community input on low cost/no cost internet (ACP), devices and free education programs.</p> | |

| Action | Action Items |
|---|--|
| Action 4.1 | <p>Digital Inclusion Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announce and/or launch upcoming Digital Prince William and ACP initiatives. Determine feasibility of having ACP sign up events in libraries, schools, park facilities, etc. Build an awareness program for having annual events around this week. |
| UPDATE Action 4.1 | Update: Planning in progress |
| Action 4.1 | <p>Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase I – Outreach on the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), press releases, sign-up events (libraries/schools), assistance from BoCS Phase I – Outreach on free technology classes for the fall (TBD) coupled with awareness campaign on EconDev’s Elevate program and other free technology classes that are available on demand online. Phase II – repeat low cost/no cost promotions, free class promotions and refine for more targeted outreach to unserved communities leveraging partners. Phase III – Refine and repeat Phase II outreach. |
| UPDATE Action 4.1 | Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standing up in Fall 2023 |
| Action 4.2 | <p>Adoption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track participation in programs and solicit feedback from participants on ways to improve. This includes working with partner agencies on current/future programs such as Girls Who Code, Tech-oriented summer camps and Elevate to get a better picture of community segments that are being served and those that still need to be reached. Develop adoption goals and measurements specific to targeted segments to incorporate into FY 2025-2027 plan. |
| Action 4.3 | <p>Community Input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase I – broadband survey, class education needs survey (bilingual) Phase II-III – leverage partners (Action 2.4) to gather community input on the plan. |
| UPDATE Action 4.3 | Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase I completed in FY 22-23 with the exception of bilingual outreach targeted for FY 24 |
| Strategy V: Use a data-driven approach to inform priorities, expenditures and target segments. | |
| Action | Action Items |
| Action 5.1 | <p>Identify target unserved and underserved segments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using census and other publicly available data, prioritize likely unserved/underserved segments in the County and locations where input, outreach, programs and services should be prioritized. Work with partners to refine priorities, outreach and programs for target segments. Provide enhanced programs and services in target areas of the County. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>UPDATE</p> <p>Action 5.1</p> | <p>Update:</p> <p>Prince William County is the 10th most diverse in the United States – just behind Brooklyn, NY. County residents from low-income households including historically underserved or marginalized population segments and those adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality in many respects face higher hurdles to overcome these obstacles because income and education gaps are disproportionately high in comparison to other population segments. In addition, more than 25% of County residents identify as Hispanic or Latinx, more than 20% identify as Black or African American, more than 10% identify as Asian, more than 25% are foreign born, and more than 34% speak languages other than English at home. This increases the importance of developing multi-lingual outreach strategies to reach these constituent groups along with micro-targeting in zip codes that disproportionately house these population segments.</p> <p>Nearly 36,000 public school students participate in the National School Lunch Program through 37 Title I schools. Senior citizens represent over 11% of the County’s population and we know from the Digital Prince William Pilot project that there is high demand in this segment for technology training and affordability programs. Veterans represent over 9% of the County’s population and persons with a disability under the age of 65 are almost 6%. The Western half of the County includes nearly 80,000 acres known as the rural crescent, some of which still lacks internet service or high-speed internet.</p> <p>Prince William County also hosts a regional adult detention center and a youth detention center. Efforts to better understand and serve this segment while in detention and post release will be more fully explored in FY25-27. Programs like the Last Mile and variations that reach incarcerated individuals serving shorter sentences will be explored in more depth.</p> |
| <p>Action 5.2</p> | <p>Develop metrics for measuring progress on all strategic action items.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: How many residents in target segments attended a class, took multiple classes, signed up for ACP, etc. |
| <p>UPDATE</p> <p>Action 5.2</p> | <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress as part of standing up NorthStar and ACP Outreach programs in the Fall of 2023. |
| <p>Action 5.3</p> | <p>Develop a Research Plan to further refine strategies and actions. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with higher education institutions that have a presence in the County (George Mason, NVCC, Strayer, etc.) to develop research. • Learn where unserved and underserved residents get their news (faith-based organizations, clubs, shops, blogs, social media, coffee shops, word-of-mouth, etc.). • Get additional clarity on languages spoken in the County. • Make surveys available in Spanish as well. • Work with economic development to determine if a County-wide workforce technology skills survey exists. If so, leverage data to inform programming. If not, prioritize. • Leverage NorthStar data to inform educational programming needs. |
| <p>Action 5.4</p> | <p>Make Research Publicly Available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit community feedback • Incorporate as appropriate into plan updates on future strategies and action items. |
| <p>Strategy VI: Explore legislation, policies and incentives that will advance digital inclusion.</p> | |

| Action | Action Items |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Action 6.1 | <p>Document any existing legislation, policies or incentives that the County currently has in place to advance Digital Inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation, policies or incentives at the County level. • Agency specific policies and/or incentives. |
| Action 6.2 | <p>Research legislation, policies and incentives that other jurisdictions have in place or are exploring to advance Digital Inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some examples currently being explored in other jurisdictions include: legislation requiring free internet access in new low-income housing developments, social service programs to help low-income residents with disabilities acquire and get training on using assistive technologies such as JAWS screen reading software and programs that subsidize acquisition of a home computer for low-income residents at no cost to the resident. |
| Action 6.3 | <p>Propose legislation, policies and incentives that will help the County advance digital inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialize research with relevant peer agencies and regional partners to develop a shortlist of actionable ideas, costs, or potential barriers. • Bring forward the best ideas to the County’s leadership team for consideration and work with them to determine next steps. |
| UPDATE Action 6.3 | <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began working with Northern Virginia regional jurisdictions in Summer of 2023 to share best practices, lessons learned and explore next steps. |

Strategy VII: Examine new technologies and programs to ensure the County offers best-in class infrastructure and advocates to ensure ISP offering are responsive to residents and business needs.

| Action | Action Items |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Action 7.1 | <p>Cable Franchise Agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align broadband goals to the extent possible in the renegotiated agreement. |
| Action 7.2 | <p>Identify and close broadband gaps in the county</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas the County for unserved broadband locations. • Develop a plan to deliver Broadband into the unserved areas. • Establish standards that will scale to meet broadband consumption demands, capable of delivering minimum 100-megabit upload and download speed (FCC standard for served) with a goal of gigabit speed • Achieve universal service (99.999%) |
| UPDATE Action 7.2 | <p>Identify and close broadband gaps in the County</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2021, DoIT awarded two contracts to All Points Broadband (APB), in which APB worked with DoIT to canvas the County for unserved broadband locations. The other contract was to identify options for delivering Broadband into the unserved areas identified. • New fiber infrastructure is needed to extend service to more than 300 remaining unserved locations that support multiple residents and/or businesses. • In late summer of 2023, DoIT will award the Access RFP to further define requirements, |

DRAFT

| | |
|------------|--|
| | deployment plans and prepare for Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program and other funding opportunities that can close the remaining gaps. |
| Action 7.3 | Develop a GIS tool that residents and visitors can use to identify County/School-sponsored free public Wi-Fi locations. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with DoIT's IT and GIS teams to determine best way to capture data on current and future plans. |
| Action 7.4 | Explore the feasibility of a demonstration pilot project to provide free broadband access to low-income housing developments. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage wireline and possibly satellite providers to determine interest in the idea and define parameters of the program, whether they would consider subsidizing the pilot.• Engage Housing & Community Development to help shape the program and identify pilot locations.• Engage other tech partners to ensure that every household in each development has at least one home computing device.• Determine other funding requirements for the pilot and any costs that would need to be accounted for when the pilot ends.• Determine feasibility for scaling the pilot County-wide. |

###