

RVBAT Meeting - March 5, 2025

Meeting Purpose

Discuss updates, share resources, and address potential impacts on funding streams for broadband initiatives in the Rogue Valley region.

Key Takeaways

- Federal funding changes are causing uncertainty, but work continues with adaptations
- Partnerships and alternative funding sources (e.g., foundations) are being explored to sustain digital equity efforts
- New technologies like Starlink are expanding emergency communication capabilities in rural areas
- Local initiatives continue to focus on digital literacy and access, especially for underserved populations

Topics

Federal Funding Landscape

- BEAD and Digital Equity funding still in play, but rules may change
- Capital Projects Fund agreements largely written, to be spent by end of 2026
- New administration hasn't taken definitive action on BEAD yet
- Potential changes: less focus on fiber, more allowance for alternative technologies
- Digital Equity grants facing challenges, especially around reporting requirements

Local Initiatives and Adaptations

- Libraries continuing digital literacy efforts despite funding uncertainties
- Jackson County Library partnering with Senior Planet for tech classes targeting seniors
- Josephine Community Library expanding services with new 5,700 sq ft space including teaching kitchen
- WorkSource partnership continuing through June, high demand leading to exploration of additional partnerships

Emerging Technologies and Services

- T-Mobile's satellite-based emergency notification system now live, pushing alerts even in areas without cellular coverage
- Starlink beta available for public signup, text-only currently with data and voice capabilities expected in the future

Collaborative Efforts

- Oregon Broadband Equity Coalition continuing monthly statewide meetings
- New statewide AI Oregon K-12 collaborative formed, focusing on AI education with a digital equity lens
- Link Oregon open to partnering on BEAD proposals, especially for middle-mile fiber extension

Next Steps

- Check and update RVBAT website for current member information and resources
- Consider participating in upcoming Oregon Broadband Equity Coalition meetings (March: language barriers, April: rural communities)
- Explore alternative funding sources, including foundation grants, for digital equity initiatives
- Continue adapting programs and partnerships to maintain services despite funding uncertainties
- Next RVBAT meeting scheduled for April 2nd, Wednesday

Action Items

- Email Ann Marie w/updated JCLD info for RVBAT website
- Send JCLS digital navigator class schedule to Christina Berger
- Send JCLD digital navigator class schedule to Christina Berger
- Check RVBAT website for accuracy of org info, notify Ann Marie of changes