

INCREASING STUDENT BROADBAND ACCESS THROUGH PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

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Public/Private Partnerships to Increase Access – How We Got Here

The private sector and public sector have pooled resources and coordinated to identify opportunities to connect Oregon's students

- March – Oregon Department of Education announced distance learning (Individual provider efforts to partner with school districts)
- April – Public/Private Partnership formed for digital equity (ODE, COSA, OBC, OCF); ODE surveyed districts to identify distance learning needs
- May 31 – Partners hosted Connected Oregon Students for Learning Summit (100 diverse stakeholders attended)
- Summer – OBC coordinated industry and broadband provider collaboration and partnership; partners presented recommendations to Governor Brown
- July 28 – Governor Brown announced \$28.1M in CARES Act funding for Comprehensive Distance Learning Grants
- August 11 – Industry and broadband providers met with statewide Superintendents at COSA meeting
- September 17 – Non-competitive grant applications due to ODE; districts may invest in five areas: broadband access, devices, software systems, digital content, and professional development
- Fall – Industry, school districts, ESDs and other stakeholders will identify opportunities for ongoing collaboration to ensure all students/families have access to broadband and devices

Our state and broadband providers have successfully connected many of Oregon's students who lacked access needed for distance learning.

- Early implementation of low-income programs to assist families with distance learning.
- One-on-one outreach from providers and local companies directly with area school leaders and school districts
- Sponsored service agreements with schools to identify students with connection needs, districts pay for broadband access, and providers offer districts discounted rates.
- Expansion of and increased investment in state and federal low-income programs to directly pay for broadband (Lifeline/OTAP)
- \$20 million CARES Act investment by Oregon for broadband grant program in OBDD – provided increased opportunities for access to students and communities through hotspot investments, direct funding for student access, and infrastructure improvements
- \$28.1 million in CARES Act funds for increasing access through Comprehensive Distance Learning Grants for districts

Connecting Oregon Students to Broadband

Too Many Students Still Aren't Connected

Despite the work and investment from public and private partners, there are still many students who aren't accessing distance learning because they can't access the Internet.

- Lack of actual broadband connectivity
- Inconsistent utilization and knowledge of available and free services
- Not all districts have the capacity to connect students who need access to providers with programs
- Limitations on how federal funds can be used
- Broadband infrastructure projects take planning and time we don't have; supply chain logjams and inventory shortages for materials make these investments difficult, if not impossible to enhance student access in the near term
- The devastation from wildfires has only made connecting students in some areas more difficult - loss of existing communications infrastructure and impact on planned broadband expansion projects is still being determined