



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



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Colt Gill

Director of the Department of Education

TO: Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, & Members of the Joint Subcommittee On Ways and Means On Education

DATE: Mar 14, 2023

FROM: Kai Turner, Assistant Superintendent Office of Finance & Information Technology

RE: Question posed about the Broadband Initiative

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, and Members of the Joint Subcommittee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide information about the question posed about the Broadband Initiative. We are more than happy to continue providing information to you on our work and look forward to our continued partnership on behalf of all Oregon students. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you need further clarification.

With gratitude,
Kai Turner

Questions & Answers

Question:

What was accomplished through the Broadband Initiative? How many districts participated? How many projects have been completed?

Response:

Please refer to the below GEER One Pager.

GEER II

EANS reverted to GEER Uses

BROADBAND INITIATIVE GRANTS

\$6.3 million

What is this initiative?

The Broadband Initiative Grants were created to fund school districts ready to start internet infrastructure projects. This additional funding covers the remaining costs of the project not already covered by the existing federal E-Rate funding, so all project costs are covered. The districts that are using GEER funds to improve their internet are Adrian School District, Annex School District, Crane Union High School District, Helix School District, Huntington School District, Luckimute Valley Charter School, and Mitchell School District, Region 18 ESD (on behalf of Imnaha School), Ukiah School District, and Vale School District.

What did it accomplish?

Ten rural school districts and Oregon schools will drastically improve internet access when these projects are completed. They will have gone from spotty, slow, and disrupted internet access to cable internet that meets or exceeds the nationally recommended bandwidth for schools. This helps reduce the digital divide and ensures that our rural students have the same level of access to the internet and its tools as our more urban students.

Adrian School District's project is complete, and Imnaha School is in the final testing stages of its project. The remaining eight school districts listed above are on track to complete their connection projects by the end of 2023.



Impact on students in Oregon?

Large, costly projects such as broadband access are often out of reach for small, extremely rural districts. The GEER Broadband Initiative Grant Recipients have repeatedly echoed the sentiments provided in written testimony from Sara Sarensen. Sara, the Business Manager at Lake County ESD, in advocating for a state match fund for E-Rate Funding projects, stated, "Please understand that these match funds did not make our project easier, and they did not make it happen a year or two sooner. These funds made it possible to happen at all." These dedicated GEER dollars will enable students at the locations to access reliable internet connectivity, and these projects further reduce the digital divide in the state. Thus, supporting ODE's mission to foster equity and excellence for every learner.



Contact information

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