RVBAT Meeting - November 06

Meeting Purpose

Review digital inclusion initiatives and grant opportunities across Southern Oregon organizations

Key Takeaways

- Digital Inclusion Week events saw good participation, with AI in education a key focus
- New E-rate rules allow hotspot checkout programs for schools/libraries (30-90% coverage)
- Multiple orgs launching digital literacy programs, targeting 50+ age group primarily
- Starlink-cellular hybrid solutions emerging as robust backup internet options

Topics

Digital Inclusion Week Recap

- SOESD AI Summit: ~50 attendees, focus on education but broadly applicable
- Recordings available for asynchronous access
- Victor Villegas conducted two 80-minute workshops, high engagement

E-rate Program Updates

- New rules allow hotspot checkout programs for schools/libraries
- Coverage: 30-90% of costs up to $15/month
- T-Mobile offering aggressive pricing (~$1.40/month in fees for some)
- Application deadline: end of December, funding starts June

Grant Opportunities and Digital Equity Initiatives

- Oregon Broadband Equity Coalition preparing for upcoming state digital equity grants
- Expected 2-month turnaround once announced

- A Greater Applegate: Starlink for Business program launched, 8 applications so far
- Jackson County Library Services developing telemedicine curricula with H+ organization

Digital Literacy Programs

- Shannon H.: First graduating class of computer basics course (7/10 English, 7 Spanish)
- WorkSource partnership: 13-14 participants per class
- Ashland Parks & Recreation: Volunteer digital tutors, partnering with library for classes
- New focus on practical applications (streaming music, digital estate planning)

Broadband Infrastructure and Emergency Preparedness

- T-Mobile/Starlink integration progressing, launch expected in coming months
- Successful trial during Hurricane Helene (500k+ messages/connections)
- A Greater Applegate setting up emergency communications hub with battery backup
- SOESD exploring cellular backup options after recent outage exposed vulnerabilities

Library Services

- Jackson County Library Services increased hotspots to ~330, 20-30 readily available
- Hired first bilingual Spanish digital services specialist
- Exploring partnerships with Oregon Child Care Alliance and Age Plus for classes

Next Steps

- Investigate availability of BEAD funding application data for gap analysis
- Continue developing telemedicine-focused digital literacy curricula
- Explore cellular/Starlink hybrid backup solutions for critical infrastructure

- Expand digital literacy programs, focusing on practical applications for 50+ age group
- Prepare for upcoming state digital equity grant opportunities

Action Items

- Update RV bat website w/missing links from members' emails
- Investigate getting BEAD funding submission data from broadband office for gap analysis
- Pull out & send shared links from chat to group