



City of Seattle

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City of Seattle celebrates One Web Day and Digital Inclusion

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Prepared for press conference held at Neighborhood House with Reclaim the Media and WashPIRG's announcement of the release of the national Public Interest Internet Agenda.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to celebrate One Web Day and its purpose of ensuring that all peoples are included on the Internet with no digital divide. We celebrate the opportunity to recognize how connected we are, recognize how far we have to go, and acknowledge the important community technology work being done by organizations like Neighborhood House. Thanks to Reclaim the Media, WashPIRG and others working on policies to support broadband access and affordability for all, local initiatives and real digital inclusion, encompassing access, literacy and meaningful content.

Across the country and the state, and even in "high tech" urban areas like Seattle, there is still a significant and troubling digital divide in access and opportunity. Research for the City of Seattle done this year illustrates the continuing need for policies and action to close the digital divide. The recommendations in the *Public Interest Internet Agenda* would support very real family and community needs in Washington State and Seattle.

A survey of Seattle residents this year found that Seattle continues to be a leading technology city.

Seattle's residential phone survey found that most households have a home computer (88%) with Internet access (84%), and almost three-fourths (74%) of those with Internet have higher speed service faster than dial up. This does not mean that everyone is included equally or has the broadband services they need.

Seattle still has significant disparities in technology adoption.

The city's 2009 Information Technology Indicators survey and focus group results confirm that some – and often the most vulnerable or marginalized residents – still struggle with digital inclusion. In an increasingly digital culture, the gap in adoption threatens greater exclusion or marginalization, and sharper disparities in opportunities for education, civic participation, jobs and economic success. The two most significant factors are education and income. The disparities for residents of color, limited English speakers, seniors and those with disabilities illustrate the need to support digital inclusion efforts that address skills training, affordability, and access (to hardware, software and technical support).

- People making under \$30,000 are only two-thirds as likely to have home Internet as those with household income above \$40,000.
- People with no college education are more than 20% less likely to have home Internet service.

Department of Information Technology

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- African American computer users and Hispanic/Latino computer users reported using the computer for fewer things, and having less computer experience overall. Less than half (44.6%) of the Latino/Hispanic households and only about two-thirds (66.6%) of African Americans have Internet at home compared to almost 90% of Caucasians.
- More seniors are connected, but still less likely to have home Internet (73% of seniors 65 and over) or an email address (69%), or have a cell or Internet capable phone.
- Disability – People with disabilities are 25 percentage points less likely to have a computer or Internet at home.

Our residents value high speed Internet service and want more, but affordability is an issue.

Three-fourths of those surveyed said that significantly faster Internet access would be somewhat or very valuable. About half of the respondents in the survey said that improving the cost of their Internet service is the one thing that would improve it the most, and 26.7% named speed first.

The Community Technology Centers that teach computer skills and help residents obtain computers make a difference and play an important role in broadband adoption.

A study by the University of Washington found that these centers provide individuals with meaningful work skills, life skills and survival skills, and they benefit families and communities as well. There are 1.4 million visits to these centers across Washington State. (See <http://communitiesconnect.wikispaces.com/UWResearch>) These centers are at the front lines of expanding opportunities for our kids, immigrants, seniors, disabled residents, small businesses and our unemployed neighbors. **They need volunteers and financial support, as well as policies which support their work.**

Seattle has been a leader in digital inclusion and we're glad to see the Agenda's recommendations.

Here are some of the ways we're helping close the digital divide:

- Our community centers, non-profits and libraries provide valuable computer access and training. We have pc's available at Neighborhood Service Centers to use. (See <http://seattle.gov/tech/techmap/>)
- This year, we granted \$250,000 to 19 Technology Matching Fund projects in the community (Handout and seattle.gov/tech/tmf), such as the Neighborhood House Lab.
- The City provides free Internet to 181 sites through our cable franchise agreement.
- Seattle.gov provides city information available in 30 languages through our portal (seattle.gov/html/citizen/language.htm)
- We encourage web and social networking skills for youth civic engagement via our Puget Sound Off partnership. (www.pugetsoundoff.org)
- We worked with the state Communities Connect Network and Legislature to create a state definition of digital inclusion. (<http://communitiesconnect.wikispaces.com/CT+Definitions>)

One Web Day is an opportunity to reaffirm that we believe in digital opportunities for all. We're glad to see the federal government's broadband stimulus effort and applaud the goals of the Public Interest Internet Agenda being released today.

Additional data from the City of Seattle Residential Technology Survey

The Internet is seen as an essential service: Nearly half say that it is "very important" for all Seattle households to have high-speed Internet access and another 40% say it is "somewhat important." African American and Latino respondents gave the highest importance ratings to high-speed access for Seattle households which, as a group, they were less likely to have.