

NRV Digital Opportunity Plan
Local Stakeholder Session
Giles Administration Offices
315 N Main Street, Pearisburg, VA
July 24, 2025, 10:30 to 12:00 pm

Session Summary

Welcome and opening remarks

John Hale with Giles County welcomed the attendees and talked about the County's objectives in convening stakeholders for digital opportunity and improving broadband use.

NRVRC Project Manager Christy Straight gave an overview of the state of broadband deployment efforts in the region; Jason Dudding with Pemtel talked about broadband in Giles specifically.

Facilitated Discussion

The conversation kicked off with a series of questions:

The Icebreaker poll: If you could solve one challenge to broadband use in Giles, what would it be? The group overwhelmingly responded with Affordability and Access.

What isn't easy or accessible to do online? How can we make it easier and more accessible (and/or more affordable)? Included the following responses:

- Sharing resources
- Streaming
- Program registration
- Newsletters

What programs and policies can help increase more and higher level broadband use? The group discussed this question and identifying challenges as much as solutions to solve the challenges.

- Key Challenges:
    - Affordability and Access: Affordability continues to be a significant barrier, particularly in rural regions.
    - Starlink has begun expanding in the western region, offering higher speeds at approximately $120/month. While it provides improved connectivity,

there are concerns about long-term sustainability and whether it will perform as well as fiber optic networks over time.
    - Sharing resources, streaming content, and completing online tasks (e.g., program registration, digital newsletters, and forms) remain difficult, especially for older adults.
    - Many users struggle with finding information online due to unfamiliar terminology or jargon.
- Opportunities and Ideas:
    - There is interest in creating partnerships with colleges to provide 1:1 digital literacy support. Libraries could be potential host sites for this assistance or trained to provide this service.
    - The group also expressed interest in exploring agriculture-specific programming to bridge digital gaps in that sector.
    - Virginia Tech Extension was identified as a key partner in implementing solutions, particularly in training and digital literacy opportunities.
    - The group raised concerns during the conversation in relation to internet access and noted public Wi-Fi hotspot programs face challenges due to misuse, suggesting enforcement or monitoring may be necessary to ensure appropriate use. Participants also felt that ACP program funding was used up quickly because individuals were receiving it who maybe did not 'need' it.

What's next for the digital opportunity planning process:

Giles was the last of the local stakeholder sessions conducted in the five localities. A public survey is being developed for additional input to be posted to the website in development where additional information will be shared. The plan is due to be completed in October.

If you could solve one challenge to broadband use in Giles County, what would it be?

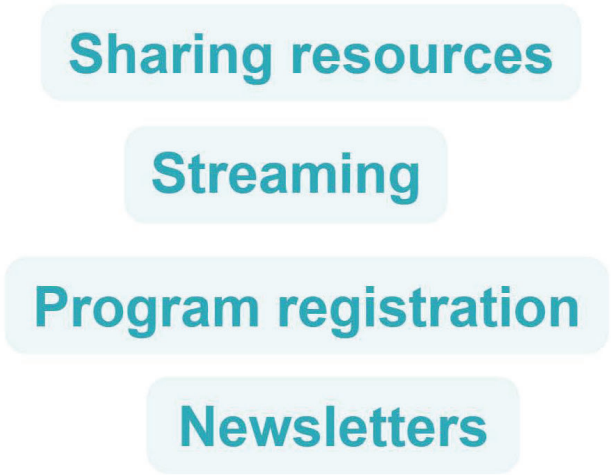
Wordcloud Poll | 4 responses | 4 participants



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What isn’t easy or accessible to do online?

Wordcloud Poll | 4 responses | 2 participants



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NRV Digital Opportunity Plan

Thursday, July 24, 2025

Giles County Stakeholder Session

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4	Jason Dudding	Pembroke Telephone CO-OP	mjdudding@pemtel.net
5	Leisa Palmer	Giles County Christian Mission	gccsmissiondirector@gmail
6	CHARLIE HERBERT	GILES COMMUNITY GARDEN	CWHERBERT1@HOTMAIL.COM
7	JOHN HALE	GILES COUNTY	JHALE@GILESCOUNTY.ORG
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9	Staff:		
10	Christy Straight	NRVRC	
11	Kinsey Weaver	NRVRL	
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