NRV Digital Opportunity Plan
Local Stakeholder Session

Radford Municipal Building, 619 2nd Street, Radford
Thursday, June 26, 2025, 9:30 to 11:00 am

Agenda

1. Welcome and opening remarks
    a. Welcome
    Jenni Webb, Director of Communications & City Clerk, City of Radford
    b. Broadband Deployment and Digital Opportunity in the NRV
    Christy Straight, Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Resources, NRVRC and Digital Opportunity Plan Project Manager
    c. Goals for the session, opening questions
    Christy Straight
2. Facilitated Discussion
    a. Brainstorming for implementation projects and programs that will expand and improve broadband affordability and use in these areas:
        - Economic development (workforce, business growth)
        - Education and Distance Learning (K-12, post-high school education, training)
        - Telehealth and Medical Care
        - Government services
        - Community [development] and Quality of Life
    b. Working to address specific populations
        - Aging Individuals (60+)
        - Incarcerated Individuals
        - Veterans
        - Individuals with Disabilities
        - Individuals with a Language Barrier/Low Literacy
        - Individuals of a Racial or Ethnic Minority
        - Rural Area residents
        - Workforce
        - Small businesses
        - K-12, College & Continuing education, distance learners
3. What's next for the digital opportunity planning process

NRV Digital Opportunity Plan

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Radford Stakeholder Session

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Session Summary

Welcome and opening remarks

Jenni Webb, Director of Communications & City Clerk, City of Radford welcomed the attendees and talked about the City's objectives in convening stakeholders for digital opportunity and improving broadband use.

The group discussed the state of broadband deployment efforts in the region and in Radford specifically. Jenni Webb noted Radford has two broadband providers in the City – Shentel and Comcast; All Points may follow, all of which is expected to create healthy market competition.

The group talked about what kind of broadband service is available and the differences between the technologies that provide the qualifying speed. With the region approaching universal coverage, the digital opportunity plan is looking at the broad range of affordability and use. Reliable and affordable broadband is often a key factor in where small businesses choose to locate.

Facilitated Discussion

The conversation continued with the Icebreaker poll: If you could solve one challenge to broadband use in Radford, what would it be? The group's responses included Affordability, Access, Maintenance, Equipment, and Availability.

Additional input and discussion with further questions followed:

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:

- *Parks and Recreation:* Opportunities to improve accessibility within the parks: light control, security cameras, running card access, available networks/hotspots, and electronic scoreboards.
- *Education:* Laptops provided by schools, Hotspots loaned to virtual students without home internet (not always returned), ongoing equipment maintenance challenges
- *Remote Work:* Some employers require hard-wired connections and specific security measures, and need for additional private spaces for remote work; the HUB is currently the best option. The Library is exploring options to create more private workspaces

What programs and policies can help increase more and higher level broadband use?

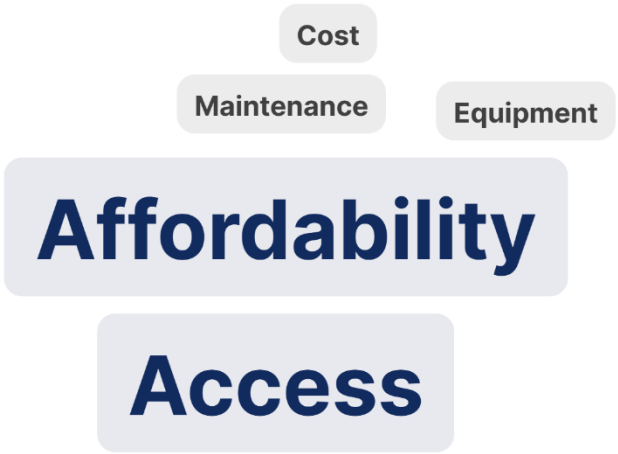
- *The Hub at Radford University* offers rentable remote workspaces with access to technology. Currently no structured tech support, one participant noted this creates an opportunity to engage students for tech assistance/volunteering.
- *Radford Library* offers 1-on-1 tech help (critical since devices vary). Partners with Literacy Volunteers of the NRV (LVNRV) to provide devices and structured digital literacy classes (e.g., how to create and use email). The senior center also offers quarterly Q&A session for all kinds of training; this could be an opportunity for partnership with Senior Services to offer classes.
- Radford Public Schools conduct a grant-funded program - FEED (Family Education, Engagement, and Discovery) which offers a variety of classes - computer and internet safety being one of them. Engagement remains a challenge despite strong marketing. Growing e-sports field - how could we leverage this to promote digital opportunities and education?
- Rec Center: A few public computers available, but no tech support currently offered.
- Hybrid events at the senior center (and possibly other places) would be a way to keep up community connections when they are unable to travel to organized events.
- The police department offers training on cybersecurity and safety practices while online.
- Public Wifi for Trails and Parks: Increases safety and recreational use. Discussion needed around feasibility, costs, and security. Option to limit network access to emergency services only
- Need: It was noted that it is difficult to get residents to come out for events. The value of event is not always apparent and outreach and education to encourage participation would help, such as one centralized place for all programs related to digital opportunities – a website that's maintained by a designated entity that others can coordinate with.

What's next for the digital opportunity planning process:

Local stakeholder sessions will continue in June & July at the other four localities. A public survey is being developed for additional input to be posted to the website in development where additional information will be shared.

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

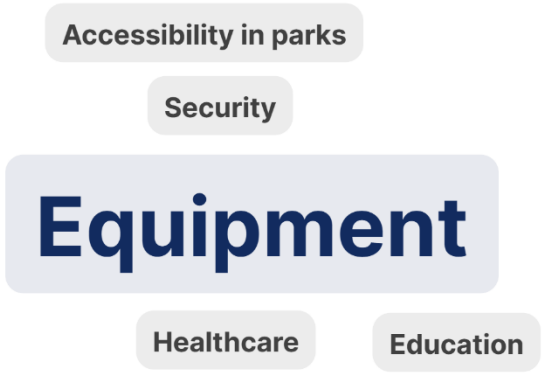
Wordcloud Poll | 7 responses | 4 participants



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What isn’t easy or accessible to do online?

Wordcloud Poll | 6 responses | 3 participants



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