

# GO GO GADGET SHOW!



CITY 101

TECH EXPOS HELP CITIZENS INSPECT THEIR INTERNET OPTIONS.

**ASK ANY BUSINESS.** Ask any individual. They all want more and better and faster broadband.


But the reality is, it may be a long time before everyone in rural Washington has the highest speed and best access to broadband. Your city can start addressing the issue by pulling a community group together to start identifying gaps in access and adoption—and a great way to get everyone involved is to organize a Tech Expo.

In Colville, the Stevens County Local Technology Planning Team (SCLTPT), led by WSU Stevens County Extension and sponsored by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds provided by the Washington State Broadband Office, organized its first Tech Expo by inviting all businesses that “touched” the Internet. Organizers included Internet service providers—local and national—and resolved to be vendor neutral (they didn’t care who provided the service) and technology neutral (they didn’t have an opinion about how the broadband was delivered). This approach allowed the team to invite all interested parties that might provide solutions to individuals and businesses. Additional vendors that could benefit small businesses in particular were web designers, web hosting service providers, computer network consultants, web security providers, organizations that offer technical assistance, and local retail stores that sell equipment.

This Tech Expo offered presentations on three topics relevant to the region: Internet and data safety, current expansion

projects in fiber optic distribution, and the future of broadband in the state. Topics can be adapted for regional interest, and there are many to choose from, such as social media, working in the cloud, and others.

Partnering with the Libraries of Stevens County, SCLTPT developed a “Gadget Garage” by purchasing one version of a range of technology tools that allow access to the Internet. These tools were “test driven” at the Tech Expo and then made available for libraries and groups to share with others after the event. Organizers developed information sheets on each product and a comparison matrix of choices so potential buyers could see what features are available at a sales price that fits their budget. The goal of the project is to let people pick up, touch, and feel a product before making a purchase.

A similar Tech Expo could easily be organized by a Chamber of Commerce, an economic development organization, or a community group, and at very reasonable cost—the Colville expo cost just under \$4,000 to produce, plus \$3,000 for the Gadget Garage. Think of it as the digital high-tech version of a home and garden show: it will benefit the vendors that attend, and it will also benefit small businesses and individuals by showcasing ideas for maximizing their Internet options and presence. 

*Debra Hansen believes that rural small business is everybody's business and works to keep all citizens engaged in the process of economic development.*

## In for a Spin

A Gadget Garage table at your Tech Expo allows guests to “test drive” gadgets that afford access to the Internet over Wi-Fi, including iPad, iTouch, Kindle Fire, Sony Reader, Android Tablet, and new Windows Surface. Comparison categories for potential purchasers include the following:

	E-mail	Word Processing	Gaming	E-books	Music & Audio Books	Video	Camera	Memory	Estimated Price
Kindle Fire	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		8G	\$159
iPod Touch	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8–64G	\$199
iPad	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	16–128G	\$499
Android Tablet	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	16G	\$199
Microsoft Surface Pro	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	64G	\$899+
Sony Reader				✓	✓			2G	\$129

