



Between 2012 and 2014 the Washington State Broadband Office, with funding from NTIA's State Broadband Initiative, offered over a dozen grants to form Local Technology Planning Teams (LTPT). WSU Extension led or participated in about half of the LTPTs. Coupling WSU Extension community engagement expertise and lessons learned from LTPT efforts the Broadband Action Team (BAT) model was developed and is being facilitated in communities in the state.

The BAT model supports the strategy that broadband is local.

BAT helps increase local engagement. Teams can be as diverse as their communities with representation from leaders of organizations to interested residents. BATs meet regularly to discuss broadband challenges and opportunities which lead to local capacity building through increased broadband awareness, access and adoption. Active BATs assist in the identification of broadband gaps then work with providers and funders to target investments to the locations with the greatest need and highest demand. The local knowledge and engagement of BAT members can help reduce telecommunications overbuilds. In addition to work on infrastructure, some BATs offer training to improve digital skills and expand technology use.

During the 2018 Washington State Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC) Conference, WSU Extension's BAT model was presented and the positive response resulted in the development of BAT training to assist other communities. A 4-hour workshop was designed and delivered in partnership with NTIA in March, 2109. As part of the North Olympic Broadband Symposium, forty-seven people organized themselves into five community groups to start their own BATs. The workshop activities included a demonstration of an NTIA data tool, exploration of best BAT practices, identification of potential partners and projects, and action planning tools. The symposium organizer reported that several teams are continuing to work together. WSU Extension is in the process of identifying funds to continue to offer this training.



The Stevens County/Spokane Tribe (SC/ST BAT) was formed in 2015 in response to lack of communications availability for emergency responders and residents during the Carpenter Road Fire. Led by WSU Extension, and in partnership with Stevens County and the Spokane Tribe, SC/ST BAT works to increase Internet access and use. This team has 46 members representing public, private and non-profit organizations as well as local, state and federal elected officials. It has now been replicated in Ferry and Lincoln County. In addition, [Partners for Rural Washington](#), a statewide non-profit rural development council, has been using the WSU Extension BAT model to assist with broadband efforts in other rural areas of the state. The SC/ST BAT leadership is evident in their various activities. Here are some examples:

Access

- Conducted a 2019 Community Broadband Survey to determine gaps in service.
- Engaged with 14 service providers to support their efforts to expand service.
- Designed a creative broadband access model to support public safety. SC/ST BAT is currently managing four Prepositioned Fire Camp (PPFC) pilot projects. One project was chosen as a Tech Team broadband infrastructure project for the Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC) Conference. A second received \$24,900 from Partners for Rural Washington for a PPFC feasibility study at the Two Rivers Resort on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has committed \$100,000 support a PPFC project (\$50K to direct build, \$50 to a consultant). The Governor and the Washington State Commissioner of Lands have recognized this as an outstanding model.

Adoption

- Organized two Stevens County *Tech Expos* (2013 and 2016): These were one-day conferences designed to address current digital issues and resources. A home-and-garden style show for geeks featured workshops and presentations on internet and data safety, telecommunications expansion projects, and a discussion about the future of broadband in the state. Any business that “touched” the internet was invited to serve as a vendor.
- Developed a “*Gadget Garage*” – A traveling crate filled with seven different digital devices that allow access the Internet for exploration and experimentation. Unveiled at the first Tech Expo, it was the single-most visited booth; used at the TEDD Social Media Class; the Libraries of Stevens County technology staff took it to eight libraries to help patrons make purchasing decisions; feedback indicated it was “great at introducing gadgets to tech newbies, but was also great at encouraging others to bring their devices and questions.”



Addressing current digital issues and expanding the future for rural businesses.



Advocacy

- Submitted four comments to federal agencies in response to requests related to programs and rule making.
- Informed federal delegation of specific concerns and led to Senators Murray and Cantwell submittal and successful inclusion of an amendment to the 2018 Ag Appropriation Bill to provide an opportunity for communities to an appeal process for the USDA Re-Connect Program.
- Developed a broadband mapping document which was been used by many BAT members including a Stevens County Commissioner during meetings with National Association of Counties (NaCO), agencies and legislators in Washington D.C. in 2018. The Stevens County IS Director continues to address mapping and public safety issues at NaCO community meetings and events.
- Participated in the first round of National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) data gathering about broadband data/mapping needs.
- Invited to present and share success stories during two NTIA BroadbandUSA webinars.
- Two members were invited to the 2017 US Senate Rural Summit in Washington DC and visited seven Washington State Congressional delegation offices, three federal agencies and one telecommunications industry association to share broadband concerns and local activity.

Replicable

Ferry County has a BAT team, and WSU Extension has conducted a 1-day workshop for the BAT Model at the North Olympic Broadband Symposium in Sequim, WA. Several communities have started their own BAT, and NTIA and USDA are replicating that workshop in Oregon and Washington.

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