

RCW 43.330.5395 Digital equity forum. (1) The Washington digital equity forum is established for the purpose of developing recommendations to advance digital connectivity in Washington state and advising the statewide broadband office on the digital equity opportunity program as provided under RCW 43.330.412 and the digital equity planning grant program as provided under RCW 43.330.5393.

(2) In developing its recommendations to advance digital connectivity, the forum must:

(a) Develop goals that are consistent with the goals of the governor's statewide broadband office, as provided in RCW 43.330.536;

(b) Strengthen public-private partnerships;

(c) Solicit public input through public hearings or informational sessions;

(d) Work to increase collaboration and communication between local, state, and federal governments and agencies; and

(e) Recommend reforms to current universal service mechanisms.

(3) The directors of the governor's statewide broadband office and the Washington state office of equity are responsible for appointing participating members of the digital equity forum and no appointment may be made unless each director concurs in the appointment. In making appointments, the directors must prioritize appointees representing:

(a) Federally recognized tribes;

(b) State agencies involved in digital equity; and

(c) Underserved and unserved communities, including historically disadvantaged communities.

(4) A majority of the participating members appointed by the directors must appoint an administrative chair for the forum.

(5) In addition to members appointed by the directors, four legislators may serve on the digital equity forum in an ex officio capacity. Legislative participants must be appointed as follows:

(a) The speaker of the house of representatives must appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives; and

(b) The president of the senate must appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

(6) (a) Funds appropriated to the forum may be used to compensate, for any work done in connection with the forum, additional persons who have lived experience navigating barriers to digital connectivity and digital equity.

(b) Each member of the digital equity forum shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel expenses as authorized in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(7) Staff for the digital equity forum must be provided by the governor's statewide broadband office and the Washington state office of equity. The governor's statewide broadband office and the Washington state office of equity are jointly responsible for transmitting the recommendations of the digital equity forum to the legislature, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, by October 28, 2025, and every odd-numbered year thereafter. [2022 c 265 § 306.]

Short title—Findings—Intent—2022 c 265: See notes following RCW 43.330.539.