

# PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description

## Promoting Digital Equity in Washington

Digital equity means ensuring that everyone – no matter where they live or their background – has equal access to digital technologies. It comprises not only access to computers or similar devices and the internet, but also the necessary skills to make best use of them. This access is essential for participation in modern society, from obtaining healthcare, education and job opportunities, to participating in social and civic life.

In recent years, Washington has taken steps to improve digital equity for its residents. In 2019, the Legislature established the Washington State Broadband Office “to encourage, foster, develop and improve affordable, quality broadband within the state.” In addition, the Office of Equity, established in 2020, promotes equitable access to opportunities and resources, specifying digital equity as one of 15 determinants of equity. The state will soon receive \$1.2 billion in federal money as part of the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program, which is to be spent on projects implemented in 2025-2028.

Digital equity efforts involve various state agencies and partners, including Native American tribes, local governments, private companies and nonprofit organizations. But the state must also establish clear strategies and responsibilities to help these diverse partners work together effectively to deliver real digital equity to all Washingtonians. Without them, different digital equity initiatives may become inefficient and lack accountability, resulting in sluggish progress toward equitable outcomes.

### Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will assess whether the state has developed a comprehensive digital equity strategy. It will also evaluate the clarity of responsibilities, and expectations around collaboration and coordination, among key agencies and partners. The audit seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Does the state have a comprehensive strategy to reduce digital disparities and effectively connect Washingtonians to technology resources?
2. Has the state clearly assigned and managed roles and responsibilities for advancing digital equity?
3. Could digital equity programs and initiatives be better coordinated to enhance efficiency, optimize funding and effectively serve Washingtonians?



Office of the  
Washington  
State Auditor  
Pat McCarthy

**Director of  
Performance and  
IT Audit:  
Scott Frank**

(564) 999-0809

[Scott.Frank@sao.wa.gov](mailto:Scott.Frank@sao.wa.gov)

**Principal  
Performance Auditor:  
Kayvon Zadeh**

(206) 613-7613

[Kayvon.Zadeh@sao.wa.gov](mailto:Kayvon.Zadeh@sao.wa.gov)

**Lead Performance  
Auditor:**

**Patrick Anderson**

(564) 999-0828

[Patrick.Anderson@sao.wa.gov](mailto:Patrick.Anderson@sao.wa.gov)

Office of the  
Washington State  
Auditor

P.O. Box 40021

Olympia, WA

98504-0021

[www.sao.wa.gov](http://www.sao.wa.gov)

[@WASStateAuditor](https://twitter.com/WASStateAuditor)

*uploaded November 2024*