

## Digital Inclusion in Action:

*How Washington's community technology nonprofits  
provide access, literacy and content*

Senate Water, Energy and  
Telecommunications Committee

*November 30, 2007*

# Communities Connect Network

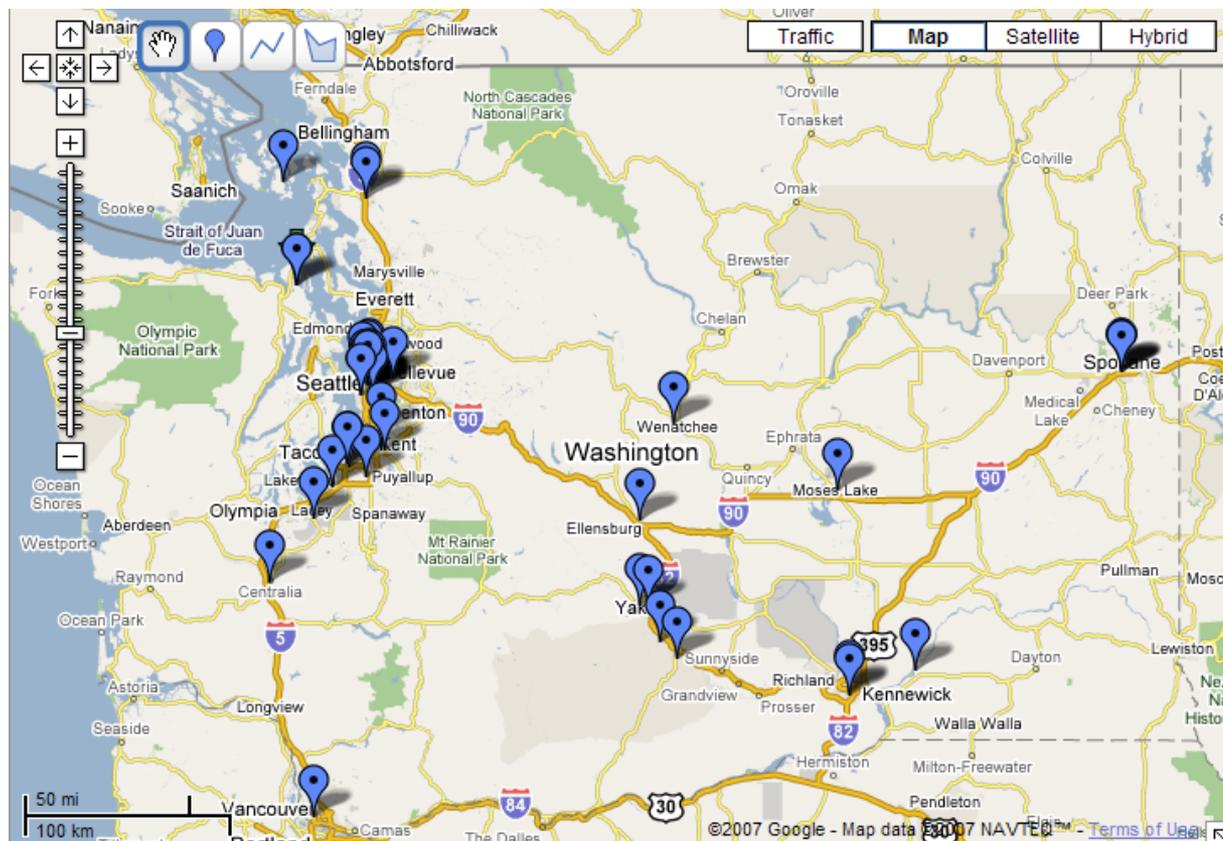
- What is Communities Connect Network?
  - A statewide coalition of public and private organizations working to ensure that Washington state is a leader in “digital inclusion” – the movement to ensure that all individuals have access and the skills to use the Internet and information technologies.
  - Lead partners include the City of Seattle Department of Information Technology, the University of Washington Information School, OneEconomy Corporation, Washington State University Extension Center to Bridge the Digital Divide, Stone Soup, and NPower Seattle
- What does CCN do?
  - Supports service providers
  - Conducts research
  - Disseminates and trains community technology providers on best practices
  - Brings awareness of the need for and impact of digital inclusion to public officials, business leaders, and the citizens of Washington state
  - Learn more at <http://communitiesconnect.org>

# Removing Barriers to Digital Inclusion

- CCN and its members have adopted this framework to help individuals, small businesses and non-profits join the information age
  - *Providing **access** to computers and the internet*
    - Availability, cost, ease of use for connectivity to the Internet, and end-user hardware and software
  - *Building **literacy** in using computer and internet technologies*
    - Skills required in order to utilize the equipment and Internet effectively for essential services, education, employment, civic engagement and cultural participation
  - *Making meaningful and useful **content and services** available*
    - Services available for those in need, culturally and educationally appropriate design, marketing and placement appropriate to reach underserved communities, and enabling of content production and distribution by lower capacity residents, businesses and organizations

# A Study of CT in Washington State

- Last summer, UW conducted a phone survey across 211 agencies in the state identified as community technology providers. 47 of these agencies completed the survey, and 7 sites were visited for more in-depth study.
- This was combined with earlier data to provide a snapshot of CT in Washington State
- Findings indicate both the impact that CT is having on communities, as well as barriers being faced



## Findings: How Many People Served?

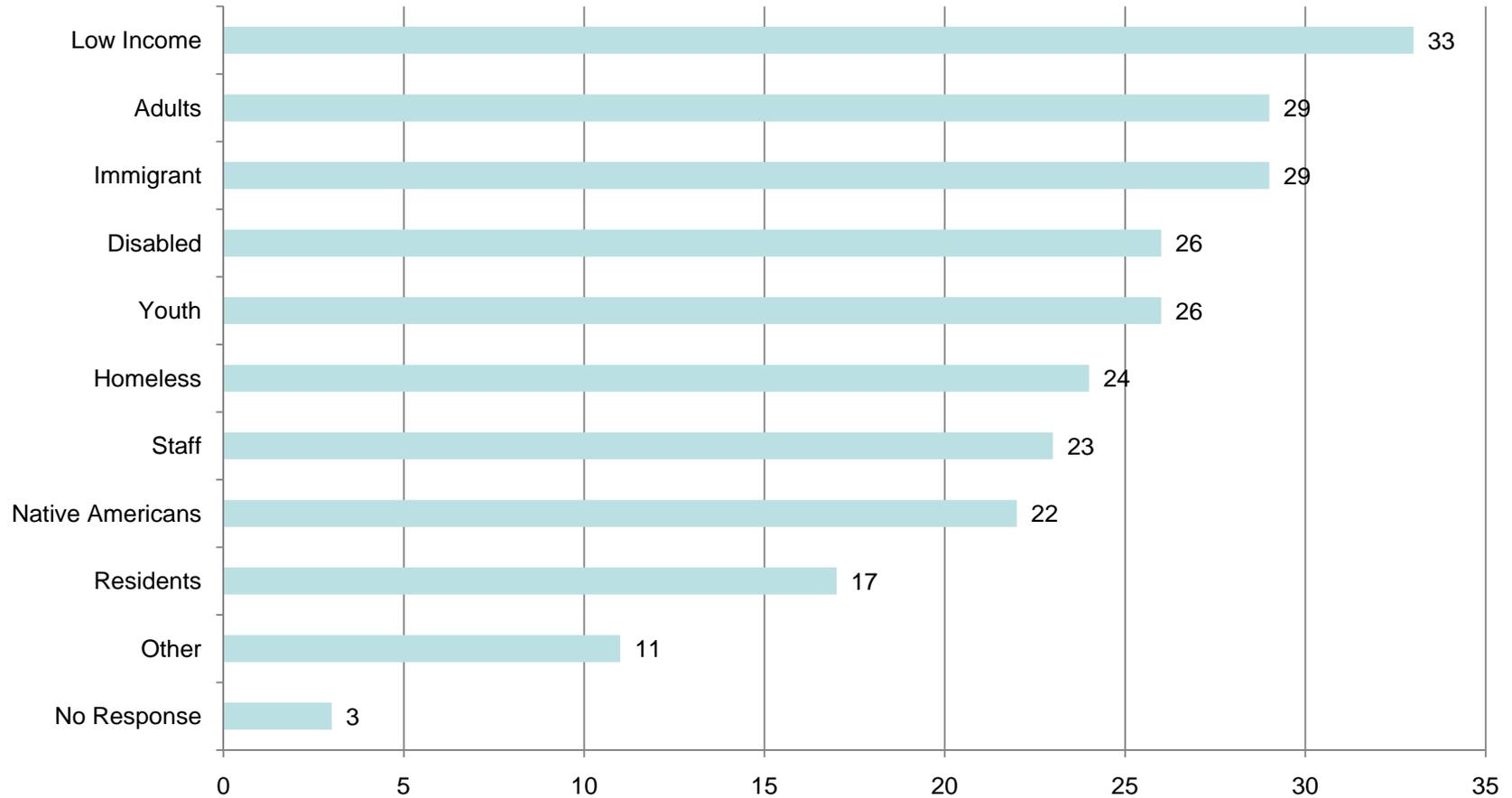
- Based on information from ***about half*** of the known community technology providers in the state— we know that these agencies serve:

***99,467 unique users*** per year

Weekly counts show that ***on average, a user visits 14 times*** during the year

Resulting in an estimated total of  
***1,392,538 visits per year***

# User Demographics



Responses from 47 surveyed programs (multiple audiences per site)

# About the Users

- **How long have users been coming?**
  - Approximately one third had been coming to the center for one year or less, just over 36% attended for 2 years, and 27% had used the center for 3 or more years.
- **How much time do they spend there?**
  - The majority of users (62%) stated that the average amount of time spent at the center ranged from less than an hour per week up to 6 hours per week, while 24% indicated that they used the center 7 or more hours per week.
- **Are users satisfied with services?**
  - 88% percent of users indicated that they will continue to use the CTCs. Furthermore, the value users find in the centers was reflected in their recommendations to others. Almost 69% of CTC recommendations were directed toward friends or acquaintances, 19% went to family and 13% percent referred to others

# Individual Benefits

- **Employment/Economic Benefits**
  - Developed job skills that prepared them for getting a job
  - Empowered to obtain additional technical skills
  - Helped gain employment
- *“The center offers a business training course that covers such issues as developing a business plan, planning finances, and determining whether a business idea is feasible. Classes include an introduction to Computers, and various Business Classes that integrate computer skills. For example, users can learn Word and develop a business plan, learn Excel to complete cash flow projections, or learn Web design and make a website for their business.”* Washington CASH, Seattle

# Individual Benefits

- **Academic Skills and Literacy**

- Providing references and/or resumes for college or jobs
- Academic improvement like raising math scores one letter grade
- Preparing users to obtain a GED or go to college

- *“I lived 27 years in the US. Over 20 years in Los Angeles. I came here; my daughter was sick. She asked for help. When I came here], I couldn’t speak or understand English. I start at English level 1. Now I am at level 5. When I finish level 5, I’d like to go to college. I like to be a nurse. Soon I take my GED. I have 4 kids. I worked for my kids. Now is time for me.”* La Casa Hogar, Yakima

# Individual Benefits

- **Social Inclusion and Personal Growth**
  - Relationship building/friendship
  - Staying out of trouble
  - Developing or expanding interests
  - Tangible skill development (e.g. leadership, public speaking)
  - Providing connections to community leaders
  - Building confidence and elevating expectations
- *“The CTC has helped a lot of people who thought they didn’t know how to do anything, for example, one woman wanted to have a bake sale. Using the CTC, she was able to learn to use Publisher and market the sale to other residents.”* Delridge Neighborhood Development Association, Seattle

# Family Benefits

- **Employment/Economic Benefits**
  - Helping users to get a better paying job
- *“One woman studied ESL. She went to school for cosmetology and then got a job.” This appeared particularly significant for seasonal laborers who wished to move beyond working in the fields.* La Casa Hogar, Yakima

# Family Benefits

- **Academic Skills and Literacy**
  - Connecting families to technology
  - Ability to help school aged children
- *“Children who have participated in club media programs have their work posted online. Families often don’t know anything about the Internet. Families wanted to see their kids and asked for CDs or recordings, but the staff guided them to get onto the Internet instead, and as they start going to their kids, it begins a conversation about the Internet among the family. Also, a lot of the students have grandparents as guardians, so the generation gap is large. Grandparents have started using the center to start interest groups in learning how to use these technologies.”* 4-H Network News, Jefferson County

# Family Benefits

- **Social Inclusion and Personal Growth**
  - Improving family relationships
  - Keeping kids safe by checking their online activities
- *“There are two girls who look like success if you see them walking down the street. One girl’s mother died when she was young. Her dad was in and out of jail. She did this documentary about her dad’s relationship. It made an impact. Now, she has a relationship with her dad and it came out of her Reel Grrls experience.”* Reel Grrls, Seattle

# Community Benefits

- **Employment/Economic Benefits**
  - More skilled work force
  - Better educated population
- *“all staff were former students who have moved into leadership positions”* La Casa Hogar, Yakima
- *“at least 50% of the youth have gone on to college, 10-15% work in technical fields, and the rest are still around working in technical environments. We have 13 kids working in internships and contract status this summer.”*  
Intel Computer Clubhouse, Tacoma
- *“learn innovative software that goes beyond basic skills...and apply it to creating things that are meaningful to themselves and community.”* (50% of the youth are transient, 25% are homeless and all live below the poverty line). Intel Computer Clubhouse, Tacoma

# Community Benefits

- **Social Inclusion and Personal Growth**
  - Develop future leaders
  - Motivate users to take action in their communities
  - Community building
- *“They [the clubhouse] supports them during their time there. The kids often come back to volunteer and/or give back to community. They operate under a model of service. They teach the idea of “Sankofa”- an African term for going back to get someone as you climb.”* Intel Computer Clubhouse, Tacoma
- *“People share skills. We have families who don’t have any exposure to technology and they learn through other residents.”* Delridge Neighborhood Development Association, Seattle
- *“It is a big part of the community. It is a stepping stone between home life and public life. It bridges these two spaces of the women’s lives. Culturally they aren’t always comfortable with the public sphere, this bridges it. Those who know more teach those who know less. They help others.”* La Casa Hogar, Yakima

# Barriers

- **Inadequate staffing or instructors**
  - *“not enough staffing. Kids must be supervised in the CTC but there are not enough people to monitor kids and give them computer access. Sometimes she's the only one there and can't supervise them in the CTC, so they can't go down there.”* Delridge Neighborhood Development Association, Seattle
- **Funding issues**
  - *“It is easier to get technology funding than staff funding.”* Reel Grrls, Seattle
  - *“The organization currently lacks the requisite money to replace their aging desktop and laptop computers.”* Washington CASH, Seattle
- **Insufficient space, computers or technologies**
  - *“Once I wanted to study the computers, but there wasn't room”* Yesler Terrace, Seattle
  - *“It's hard to run an Internet business with no bandwidth “* Stone Soup, Republic

# Voices from the Field

- In the process of doing our research, we collected many stories from the sites we visited and surveyed that show the direct impact community technology is making in Washington State
- Rather than giving those to you second hand, we have here with us today people who are making all this possible
- They will give you a first hand picture of the impact, barriers and needs of community technology providers



Reel Grrls office and users' work area (small table)

# Our Speakers

- Ronda Evans, *RECA Foundation*
- Karen Manuel, *Puget Sound Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology*
- Pamela Roberts, *Jefferson County 4-H Network News*
- Joanne Knouf, *Community Technology of NCW*
- Ken Thompson, *Program Officer, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*