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## **Workforce Southwest Washington and partners provide computers to help families in need connect to job and education resources**

**Vancouver, Wash. (May 28, 2020)** – Thirty families in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties are receiving new Chromebooks thanks to a partnership between [Workforce Southwest Washington](#) (WSW), [Edge Networks](#) and the [Community Foundation for Southwest Washington](#) (CFSWW).

“As work, education and healthcare are continuing to move online and more is done virtually, those in our community without computers and internet access risk falling behind economically and not being able to access vital resources for themselves and their families,” said Kevin Perkey, CEO of Workforce Southwest Washington. “Ensuring rural communities and individuals with low incomes can access tools and resources to do their work, find employment or obtain education or training is imperative to their prosperity and our region’s economic growth.”

“We are fortunate the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington provided a grant from its SW Washington COVID Response Fund to make this project a reality,” said Perkey.

Chromebooks were distributed in mid-May to community partners WSU Extension in Cathlamet, Wahkiakum School District and Lower Columbia CAP. These groups are identifying individuals and families in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties in need of technology resources to stay connected to work and education.

Edge Networks, an IT support services firm headquartered in Vancouver, WA, procured and configured the Chromebooks.

“Our community must come together during difficult times to support each other,” said Mark Tishenko, Founder of Edge Networks. “Giving back is a core belief of Edge Networks, and we are very fortunate that we can help and serve the community by partnering with Workforce Southwest Washington.”

A long-time supporter of workforce programs, Tishenko’s firm is also donating training on how to use the devices and ongoing technology support at no cost to the individuals and families receiving the Chromebooks.

In addition to giving away Chromebooks, WSW is partnering with Comcast Internet Essentials and the Community Foundation and providing free internet access for six months to 200 families in Cowlitz and Clark counties.

“A major focus of the SW Washington COVID Response Fund is to support basic human needs, and the pandemic is shining a light on how vital technology has become in our lives,” Jennifer Rhoads, President

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of the [Community Foundation](#), said. “We hope this grant raises awareness of the needs within our region and inspires others to contribute to this important relief fund.”

According to a May 27 [Brookings Institution article](#), 18 to 36 million Americans, largely in rural communities, are without access to a broadband network.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports for 2014-2018, in Cowlitz County 79.7 percent of households had a broadband internet subscription. In Wahkiakum County 79.6 percent were connected, compared to 86.5 percent in the State of Washington.

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**About Workforce SW Washington** – Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW) funds community prosperity by investing in services and training that help individuals gain skills to find a good-paying job or advance in their careers and help companies attract, train and retain workers. Our investments strengthen the region’s businesses and contribute to a strong economy. Since 2003, we’ve invested more than \$100 million in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. Learn more at [www.workforcesw.org](http://www.workforcesw.org).

**About Edge Networks** – When you work with Edge Networks, you have a cavalry of IT professionals behind you that’s dedicated to solving issues fast and recommending the right solution. Learn more at [www.edgenetworks.us](http://www.edgenetworks.us).

**About the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington** – Established in 1984, the Community Foundation helps local residents build a more vibrant community by inspiring investments in local philanthropy. The Foundation holds more than 360 distinct funds, which are actively invested to grow charitable assets. Governed by an esteemed volunteer Board of Directors, the Community Foundation offers benefits and services to donors, nonprofits and the community at large. Learn more at [www.cfsww.org](http://www.cfsww.org).

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