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## Community Anchor Institutions in Rural Washington Connected by NoaNet

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By L. Gonzalez, Community Broadband Networks

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[Adams County](#), situated in eastern Washington, is now connected to the regional Northwest *Open Access* Network (NoaNet) infrastructure. Ritzville, the county seat and home to about 1,600 people, connected last fall, funded through a combination of American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) stimulus grants, funds from public utility districts, and surrounding communities. As with other NoaNet projects, connectivity will include community anchor institutions in Ritzville such as the library, schools, and local healthcare clinics.

[NoaNet](#), a nonprofit corporation, is bringing wholesale fiber backbone infrastructure across the state of Washington, connecting community anchor institutions (CAIs). Schools, hospitals, libraries, and government facilities connect via the open access network and retail providers bring service over the network. NoaNet's membership includes municipal utilities, tribes, cities, and counties. The collaboration began in 2000 and received \$140 million in federal stimulus dollars to [connect rural Washington state](#).

The community celebrated in November with a Ritzville Public Library Open House to show off the new technology. From the [NoaNet Press Release](#) :

*"We're just very excited about having consistently fast, high-speed Internet for our patrons. The benefits will be huge for everyone from online students watching class lectures to tech junkies trying to stream Pandora while downloading YouTube videos, to library staff offering reference help to the public" said Kylie Fullmer, Director of the Ritzville Public Library. "And once it becomes more widely available throughout the community, I think people are going to be just as excited as we are."*

Local community members recognize the importance of what the new connection can do for this agricultural community. Like many other small communities across the country, rural towns like Ritzville see their youth leave for larger markets for career reasons. From an editorial in the [Columbia Basin Herald](#):

*We are pleased Ritzville has this service and hope more educational, job and business opportunities abound for the area.*

*We hope the project helps even the playing field for people living in the rural communities of the Columbia Basin.*

*Doing so could mean we have more family wage jobs and opportunities for our youth.*

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