

Microsoft initiative hopes to close digital divide in El Paso

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FILE PHOTO: The Microsoft sign is shown on top of the Microsoft Theatre in Los Angeles, California, U.S., Oct. 19, 2018. REUTERS/Mike Blake/File Photo

EL PASO, Texas (KTSM) – Microsoft announced an expansion of its Airband initiative to El Paso with hopes to address gaps in access to broadband internet throughout the community.

Microsoft's Airband initiative was created to better access to high-speed

internet for communities disproportionately affected by a lack of coverage.

The fortune-500 company says it will donate refurbished devices to the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center-El Paso campus as part of a partnership with PlanITROI, a technology company based in New Jersey. That effort is in support of the Promotres program, that provides support to underserved communities in the area.

There will also be a coordination with the TechSpark program initiated in El Paso a few years ago by Microsoft to bolster connectivity in the region. That effort will help donate and distribute free and low-cost refurbished devices.

Additional devices will be donated to Workforce Solutions Borderplex to be given to individuals who complete digital skilling credentials and who receive internet enrollment assistance with the agency.

There will also be a collaboration with EveryoneOn, an organization that aims to provide bilingual internet enrollment assistance and digital skilling so people can get good-paying jobs in the digital world.

Microsoft claims 120.4 million people in the U.S. do not have access to broadband speed internet, which varies greatly from federal data that claims 14.5 million people do not.

The company says roughly 380,000 people do not use internet at broadband speeds in El Paso County.

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