

**A DESIGN FOR A WESTERN REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE**

An Environment Ready for Telecommunications

**Executive Summary**

Benefits of Cooperation in the Use of Telecommunications

This is a proposal to establish a multistate telecommunications cooperative in the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain region. Among these states there is a high level of activity in developing statewide telecommunications networks for the delivery of educational programs.

These states share a number of demographic characteristics and economic conditions and, as a result, are trying to address many of the same problems. Telecommunications offers great potential for stimulating economic progress by delivering continuing education and other services to professionals and for enhancing educational access by providing high quality educational services to citizens spread over great distances.

The investments that each state has or will make in their telecommunications networks are significant and, with few additional resources, their networks could be expanded to tap into other resources, expertise, programs available throughout the region. The Western Regional Telecommunications Cooperative, as described in the following pages, would enable these western states to cooperatively use telecommunications to address common objectives. The purpose of the cooperative would be to facilitate the sharing of telecommunications technologies, programs, and resources, including faculty and technical experts, for educational and other purposes on an interstate basis.

This report is a compilation of two papers prepared by Dwight Dively (Washington) and Raymond Lewis (Oregon), consultants to this WICHE telecommunications project. Their work was commissioned to provide some important background information to assist WICHE in developing a plan for a regional telecommunications cooperative. Dively collected information on the level and the direction of planning for a telecommunications network in ten western states. Based on this information, he examined various options for building an interconnected telecommunications system among several states (see pages 8-13). Using the successful model provided by the Utah State Telecommunications Cooperative, Lewis' work sets the framework for the organization, membership, and objectives for a western regional telecommunications cooperative (see pages 13-18). Developments in the field of telecommunications occur quite rapidly. Comments and updates, especially to the state reports, are welcomed and should be sent to Mollie McGill, WICHE, P. O. Drawer P, Boulder, CO 80301-9752.