April 27, 2020 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Melissa Armas, Sherri Bakker, Michael Cohen, Steve Crooks, Jerry Crow, Mark Dallmeier, Terence Ford, Tim Harrington, Ian Hathcock, Holly Henley, Steve Hill, Larry Light, Janet Major, Sophia Mayberry, Keedo Monroe, Mala Muralidharan, Daniel Schwiebert, Jeff Sobotka, Dan Stormont, Pam Tarrer, Graham Taylor, Cory TerEick, Nicole Umayam, Nan Williams

Updates: State Broadband Director, State Library, Telemedicine, ADE

State Broadband Director

Jeff Sobotka, State Broadband Director, provided an update on his current activities. Jeff continues to work on the hotspots distribution program discussed at previous task force meetings. Cisco has agreed to work with the libraries on extending Wi-Fi access to library parking lots. Jeff is continuing to collaborate with the Arizona Telemedicine Program on creating webinars to explain USDA telemedicine grants and encourage as many applications as possible. The Arizona Commerce Authority is offering a small business boot camp regarding the federal stimulus loan program (see the Appendix Chat for the link).

Arizona State Library

Mala Muralidharan, E-rate Administrator for Public Libraries at the Arizona State Library, provided an update on her activities. The deadline for new E-rate grant applications is April 29th, and she is working with libraries around the state to submit applications. As Jeff Sobotka mentioned, Cisco is currently working with five libraries to boost their Wi-Fi signals to their parking lots, and this should be up and running in about ten days.

Arizona Telemedicine Program

Janet Major, Associate Director of Education & Facilities for the Arizona Telemedicine Program, discussed USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants programs (link provided in Appendix Chat). The Arizona Telemedicine Program will be conducting a workshop on how to write a successful telemedicine grant. There will be another USDA webinar on May 10th, with grant applications due by July 13th. Janet will be working with Jeff Sobotka on coordination of these webinars. There are also continuing online training webinars on telehealth by the Arizona Telemedicine Program's Southwest Telehealth Resource Center (see link provided in Appendix Chat).

Arizona Department of Education (ADE)

Sophia Mayberry, Project Manager in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction at ADE, stated the ADE is continuing with their research survey of state schools to understand the digital divide issues of Internet access and devices needed by students to continue learning during the COVID-19 school closures. They have received hundreds of responses, and are in the process of cleaning up the data for future use. Sophia is continuing to work with Jeff Sobotka and the Governor's Office on obtaining hotspots and laptop donations.

<u>Task Force Website</u>

Steve Peters summarized saying he will be including information on relevant resources (including links) under the Updates/Resources tab of the COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force webpage.

Subcommittees Mobilization

Steve thanked Cory TerEick, Advisor/Consultant at MSS Management Consulting Services, and Terence Ford, Regional Services Account Executive – Enterprise Services Solution Sales at Insight, for their work on moving ahead with the mobilization of the COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force subcommittees. An initial meeting with the champions of the subcommittees was held on April 24th.

Insight provided a Microsoft Teams training webinar for the task force on April 23rd. Terence Ford explained the webinar was intended for novice as well as extended-power users, and that all of the Teams' functionalities described will not be needed for this task force. Insight will offer additional support for task force participants on the use of Microsoft Teams.

Steve commented that some webinar attendees were overwhelmed by the Teams functionalities discussed at the webinar, but the task force will only use a small part of the functionalities available. Steve said there will be more basic training support provided on the use of Teams for this task force. Terence added there is a "Quick Help" learning tool that provides simple instructions on the use of Teams.   Steve stated the champions of the subcommittees agreed at the April 24th meeting to use Teams as the collaboration platform for this task force.

Cory TerEick reviewed the champions of each subcommittee:

Education: Nan Williams

Libraries: Mala Muralidharan and Nicole Umayam

Communities: John Lucas, Bob Jacobson, Alan Pruitt

Technology: Tom Mehlert, Steve Hill, John Lucas

Funding and Resources: Lea Marquez Peterson

Steve stated that 35 people have volunteered so far to participate in the subcommittees. He will be issuing an AZBSN newsletter to invite other stakeholders around the state to join the task force subcommittees. The newsletter will be e-mailed this week or early next week. Steve has waited to issue this newsletter until the subcommittees with their champions had been established, the collaboration platform chosen, and the website updated.

Cory stated subcommittee volunteers should receive an e-mail this week about the kickoff meetings of their subcommittees. New volunteers will get involved later. Cory reviewed where

we are at in terms of the MSS Roadmap of the task force processes described at previous task force meetings. We have begun the first stage of mobilizing the subcommittees, and are moving into the second stage "Develop Plans". There will be a survey sent out soon on what members of each subcommittee think should be the goals/objectives of each subcommittee.

Steve added he is working on infrastructure to manage task force meetings and share relevant information. Terence added the subcommittees can integrate new information such as the ADE survey and wireless hotspots availability.

Connectivity Approaches: Satellite Services and Mesh Networks

Satellite Services

Steve Hill, President of the Satellite Broadcasting & Communications Association (the national trade organization representing the consumer satellite industry), provided an overview of satellite services that could be considered as Internet access solutions for this task force.

Steve Hill noted that the FCC issued a report recently saying satellite services can now cover the entire country with Internet access speeds of 25 Mbps download, 3 Mbps upload. In some cases 100 Mbps download can be achieved. Such satellite service can be installed for a user in 3 -5 business days. Satellite services are being used for various applications such as telehealth, distance learning, business continuity, agriculture and e-commerce. Zoom teleconferencing is often supported in all these areas.

Viasat is quadrupling its satellite capacity from about 250 Gbps to 1 Tbps. Steve will share with the task force a one-page overview on this.

Jeff Sobotka commented Viasat is setting up community Internet service with Wi-Fi access for the town of Mammoth, AZ. Steve Hill responded that HughesNet is doing similar things with other communities around the country. Steve Peters added that he has mentioned in the past that Viasat is offering during the COVID-19 crisis free access to its public Wi-Fi hotspots in different locations around the state.

Steve Hill commented satellite services are being used for distance learning in low-income communities. Jeff noted that the Navajo/Hopi Native American tribes are having a difficult time during the COVID-19 crisis, and asked if HughesNet could help them. Steve Hill responded he will put Jeff in touch with them.

Mesh Networks

Melissa Armas, Founder of the Arizona Blockchain Initiative (non-profit organization training under-served people to use Internet and technology in their careers), is working on getting low-income neighborhoods connected using a "mesh networks" approach based on Wi-Fi hotspots and fiber access to the Internet. They have built such a mesh network for Gateway Community College, and have proposed a budget for the City of Phoenix and the Phoenix Union High School District to provide wireless hotspots at seven high schools that have fiber access to the Internet via the E-rate program. They are also looking at expanding this approach to various libraries.

Steve Peters asked if this mesh networks approach could be applied to rural communities that could have satellite Internet service. Jeff Sobotka stated many rural schools and libraries have fiber Internet access through the E-rate modernization program funding, and that this mesh networks approach could apply to them in a similar manner. Mala Muralidharan stated now that

schools/libraries have robust fiber backhaul to the Internet from E-rate funding, the next step would be to establish mesh networks that extend to the surrounding neighborhoods. Mala remarked that this process would have happened eventually, but the COVID-19 crisis is providing a catalyst for this to happen faster. Melissa added that students would be able to access such a mesh network with their student ID.

Mala noted there is an "E-rate for Homes" proposal for funding that is being considered by the FCC and Congress. Jeff stated that the federal funding coming will determine what can be done. Jeff added that the ADE survey will clarify to many policy makers the number of students that lack Internet access around the state – this data will be critical in crystallizing what needs to be done.

Next Steps

Steve will be working on getting everything in place so the subcommittees can begin on their work.

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, May 4th at 7:30 am.

Mark Goldstein commented he will put out his "Arizona Tech Events Calendar" soon, and include task force participants in his e-mail list.

Henry Goldberg and Oris Friesen will write up a summary report of today's task force meeting.

Appendix: Chat from Zoom

From Dan Stormont to Everyone: (07:38 AM)
  I was late because I thought you were going to be using Teams now. I was looking for the Teams invite!

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (07:42 AM)
  See Steve Zylstra/Arizona Tech Council's article in the Phoenix Business Journal (4/18/20) titled "My View: Amid crisis, every Arizona student needs access to broadband, digital devices" at https://www.bizjournals.com/phoenix/news/2020/04/18/my-view-amid-crisis-every-arizona-student-needs.html. I've reached out to Ilana Lowery, regional director for Common Sense (https://www.commonsensemedia.org/) in Arizona to get her involved in the Task Force.
From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (07:42 AM)
  The IEEE Computer Society published "Wireless Communication and the Pandemic: The Story So Far" about a week ago available online at https://www.comsoc.org/publications/ctn/wireless-communication-and-pandemic-story-so-far. Though a bit 5G centric, it does a good job at looking at various wireless application verticals in this time of pandemic.

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (07:42 AM)
  Also, the Broadband Communities Magazine (https://www.bbcmag.com/) issue for March-April is focused on federal funding for rural broadband and attached for your reference. In particular, see "Help Is on the Way: Rural Broadband Funding Update" on pages 20-22 or online

at https://www.bbcmag.com/law-and-policy/help-is-on-the-way-rural-broadband-funding-update. There's also details on the first wave of ReConnect awards (pages 24-26F) and an article on ISPs business models and growth factors (pages 80-83).

From Janet Major to Everyone: (07:49 AM)
  Great grant resources including the USDA DLT grants:
https://usdla.org/grants/

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (07:51 AM)

[file: (null)]

From Jeff Sobotka to Everyone: (07:52 AM)
  Small Business Bootcamp
https://go.azcommerce.com/webmail/629661/227771707/d733298ea17f9e82dcf141b0948a943f7
8ee4ac52cf4957ecfd0031332839e39

From Jeff Sobotka to Everyone: (07:53 AM)
  Please confirm the link is active IPs outside of the ACA

From Janet Major to Everyone: (07:54 AM)
  https://southwesttrc.org/resources/covid19

From Melissa Armas to Everyone: (08:01 AM)
  @Jeff It's ALIVE!!

From Steve Crooks to Everyone: (08:17 AM)
  Jeff, what community did you mention around Tucson that had a community system launched?
Thanks

From Dr. Tim J Harrington to Everyone: (08:23 AM)
  Has anyone on the education team looked at tele-broadcasting (on analog base network)?
Realization when visiting a remote farm where there is no cell or satellite coverage… yet the
neighborhood has TV via local transmissions… too many of our true rural (even 20 miles from
small cities like Prescott do not have access to broadband at home…

From Sophia Mayberry to Everyone: (08:30 AM)
  I'd also like the link at the top of an email if possible instead of the bottom. Great job!