

## February 7, 2020 Leadership Team Meeting Teleconference Report

### **Attendees**

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Derek Masseth, Alan Pruitt, Dan Stormont, Graham Taylor, Nan Williams

### **Welcome New Member of AZBSN Leadership Team**

Steve welcomed Alan Pruitt to the Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network (AZBSN) leadership team. Alan is Executive Director of the Western Arizona Economic Development District (WAED). Alan explained WAED covers Mojave, La Paz, and Yuma counties, and he is based in Yuma. Alan stated he has been interested in broadband development since 2007, and WAED will be holding a broadband action meeting in three weeks. The agriculture industry is their highest priority for broadband deployment.

Mark Goldstein asked Alan about the relationship of WAED with WACOG, for whom he had done a broadband study in 2013-14. Alan replied WAED is not part of WACOG (different from the other COGs in Arizona). Mark will send Alan his broadband report done for WACOG.

### **January 23, 2020 Webinar Brief Overview**

The January 23rd Webinar included presentations by: 1) Jeff Sobotka (State Broadband Director and Vice President at the Arizona Commerce Authority), who provided an excellent overview of his activities in promoting broadband deployment statewide as well as the Governor's proposed broadband funding for the 2020 budget; 2) Brian Smith (General Field Representative Arizona/New Mexico for the USDA Telecommunications Program) who discussed the USDA grant/loan programs for rural broadband including the Broadband ReConnect Program Round 2; and Paul Fleming (COO of Wecom Inc.) that was awarded a ReConnect Program broadband grant in Round 1 to serve Peach Springs, AZ.

There were 90 people who registered to attend this webinar and 65 -70 people who participated. These included representatives from local communities, economic development organizations, schools, universities, Native American tribes, and broadband service providers.

Henry Goldberg mentioned that the Broadband Reconnect Program application appears to be lengthy and complex, so will be difficult to complete in the time window allotted. Steve stated Jeff Sobotka is providing assistance to communities applying for USDA Broadband Reconnect grants/loans.

Steve explained that the AZBSN wants to work with rural communities to determine what types of roundtables/webinars/newsletters will be most useful to them.

## **Discussion of FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund**

The FCC has announced it has created a Rural Digital Opportunity Fund that will provide \$20.4 billion over the next ten years to fund up to gigabit-speed broadband networks for underserved rural communities.

Steve noted that communities that have received federal or state broadband funding in the past will not be eligible for this new FCC funding program. Alan Pruitt agreed that various service areas will not be eligible, and they are looking into using federal government mapping tools to determine which areas are eligible. FCC Connect America Phase I and Phase II grant funding in the past makes various service areas ineligible for the new Rural Digital Opportunity Fund grants. Alan stated federal government definitions are somewhat fluid between different departments and the time expirations of grants need to be clarified.

Steve added there was an FCC roadshow in Arizona in late January, but this did not deal with broadband issues.

## **AZBSN Newsletter and Other Announcements**

Steve e-mailed on February 6th a major AZBSN newsletter to the AZBSN contact list (currently about 1500 people). It included descriptions of a number of upcoming events of interest.

Steve prepared a one-page flyer describing the AZBSN, which is available on the AZBSN website (on the ATIC site) for people to use for publicity.

Mark Goldstein noted the NIST & NCTA Global City Teams Challenge (GCTC) Smart Agriculture and Rural Broadband SuperCluster Workshop will be held in Phoenix on February 19, 2020, and it is free to attend. Mark suggested Steve discuss with Jeff Sobotka how to publicize this workshop (since it was not included in the February AZBSN newsletter).

The Arizona School Board Association Rural Alliance and Rural Advocacy Day will be held on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Steve stated this Rural Alliance has broadband on their agenda and is interested in participating in the AZBSN. Derek Masseth added that he will be attending this event because it is important for the Sun Corridor Network.

The Helios Education Foundation is creating an "Arizona Student Opportunity Collaborative" in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education, Arizona State University, and seven rural school districts. Some of the rural communities/districts represented in the pilot program include: Ajo Unified, Camp Verde Unified, Prescott Unified School District, Humboldt Unified School District, Show Low Unified, Miami Unified, and Ray Unified. Steve explained broadband will be important to this endeavor.

## AZBSN 2020 Plan

Steve discussed activities to implement the draft plan for AZBSN activities in 2020 distributed at the January 7<sup>th</sup> meeting:

- ) Coordination of 2 statewide in person Stakeholder Roundtables, with webinar/audio, web and video conferencing available. Roundtables may include: presentations; updates and information sharing; project/vendor showcase; networking
- ) Bi-monthly Webinars
- ) Periodic stakeholder email newsletters/updates such as announcements of federal, state and local resources and funding opportunities, events, articles, etc.
- ) Posting announcements on the ATIC and GAZEL LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook accounts
- ) The ATIC/AZBSN website to include: a calendar of events related to broadband planning and related initiatives; overview/summaries of Arizona broadband planning initiatives, entities, contacts and resources, access to information about strategies and resources for planning and deployment of broadband
- ) An integrated GAZEL/ATIC CRM/database and email communication platform to connect with key leaders and interested parties representing stakeholder groups
- ) Collateral material such as AZBSN flyers
- ) Discussion of telecom planning and policy issues
- ) Exhibits at education, technology, government, healthcare, economic development conferences and events
- ) A collaboration platform

Steve explained that he will be coordinating AZBSN activities carefully with Jeff Sobotka, so that the AZBSN supports statewide goals for promoting the deployment of broadband infrastructure and applications.

Steve stated that one in-person stakeholder roundtable will be held in mid to late May, and the second roundtable be held in early to mid November. Steve will request available dates from Rio Salado College, a good location for these roundtables. Steve wants to have more time available for discussions and networking than at the first roundtable held on May 28, 2019. Derek Masseth commented there are a lot of different broadband activities going on in the state, and suggested there be time available to discuss each key area. It was agreed that the roundtables need to be a full day to accommodate this. Steve will work on arranging the presenters for the May roundtable.

Steve stated that there will be bi-monthly webinars (as long as they don't conflict with the roundtable dates). The next webinar will be in March. This March webinar may focus on key state resources such as the Arizona Telemedicine Program, the State Library E-rate program, the Sun Corridor Network, smart cities/region activities in Arizona, and the Arizona Blockchain Initiative. Webinars will typically be 1.5 hours in length. Steve wants to attempt to ensure AZBSN Leadership Team members are available to attend the webinars.

Steve plans to issue another newsletter in March. It will likely include information about the Sun Corridor Network, the Arizona Telemedicine Program, the E-rate program, FirstNet, and the upcoming March webinar.

The AZBSN website (hosted on the ATIC website) will post relevant events and also highlight information on available broadband funding sources. Steve would like assistance with promoting the AZBSN on social media.

Steve continues to update the ATIC/GAZEL database of contacts with current information. He is currently using Mark Goldstein's Sendinblue e-mail platform but will be migrating to a new CRM platform in the future.

Steve would like to have discussion of telecommunications planning and policy issues at the roundtables/webinars. He may approach the Governor's Office about getting access to the new State Broadband Strategic Plan.

Steve will be looking into a collaboration platform for the AZBSN, likely "Mobilize".

The attendees of today's AZBSN Leadership Team agreed that this plan for 2020 activities is comprehensive and generally supported the plan. Mark Goldstein commented he is pleased with progress so far, but need to get going on arranging sponsors to fund future activities of the AZBSN.

## **Seeking AZBSN Sponsors**

Steve has almost finalized the AZBSN Sponsorship Request Document and will be seeking sponsors shortly.

Steve stated he would like to discuss with Derek Masseth the possibility of the University of Arizona and Arizona State University being sponsors of the AZBSN.

Graham Taylor commented that his company Fatbeam may be interested in being an AZBSN sponsor.

## **Next Steps**

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