



## **July 20, 2020 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report**

### **Attendees**

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Amanda Bruno, Kirk Busch, Michael Cohen, Jerry Crow, Steve Daurio, Dan Doehler, Derek Ferguson, Terence Ford, Ian Hathcock, Holly Henley, Bob Jacobson, John Kelly, John Lefante, Kari Lipman, Tarma Liranzo, Ilana Lowery, Derek Masseth, Sophia Mayberry, Mauricio Orozco, Cody Pedersen, Lea Marquez Peterson, Michelle Reid, Sam Shammah, Michelle Simon, Jeff Sobotka, Dan Stormont, Graham Taylor, Nicole Umayam

### **Task Force Activities and Preliminary Recommendations Document**

Steve Peters noted that overall task force meetings are tentatively scheduled for July 27<sup>th</sup> and August 3<sup>rd</sup>. On July 27<sup>th</sup>, Joselyn Cousins, District Manager – Field Group & Community Development of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, will present to the task force on the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), providing a high-level overview of its purpose and funding opportunities. Steve added that some task force members had a preliminary meeting with Joselyn Cousins (as noted at a previous task force meeting), and this has the potential to be a great resource for Arizona digital equity funding.

Steve explained the number one priority of the task force now is to complete and distribute before the end of July the task force's preliminary recommendations document. Steve noted that Henry Goldberg prepared versions of the Education and Libraries subcommittee and the Funding and Resource subcommittee recommendations organized under appropriate categories based on information discussed at previous task force meetings with added data/commentary as necessary. Mala Muralidharan and Henry communicated yesterday on Mala's edited/supplemented version of these Education and Libraries recommendations, which was distributed to Steve. Mark Goldstein is working on the portfolio of technology options section for the document for the Technology subcommittee. Steve is working on the introduction section of the document and will be assembling the overall document. Steve will distribute shortly the draft document to the task force for comments.

Steve solicited input on who the task force's preliminary recommendations document should be distributed to. Lea Marquez Peterson stated the Arizona federal delegation should be aware of this. Terence Ford stated Kathy Hoffman, the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction, should receive this. Ilana Lowery stated the Arizona School Boards Association (ASBA) should receive this. Nicole Umayam stated the Broadband Action Teams (BATs) that exist around the state (such as the Telehealth BAT) should receive this. Other suggestions were appropriate representative of schools and libraries, the Department of Economic Security, and the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). Steve concluded there are many others

who could receive this document, and he will work on a letter of transmittal to go along with the document.

## **Updates: State Broadband Director, Arizona State Library, ADE, ACC, Telehealth**

### State Broadband Director Update

Jeff Sobotka, State Broadband Director, reviewed his recent activities. He is very involved with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants for Arizona related to COVID-19 with projects underway at Yuma County, Springerville, the Verde Valley, and Douglas. These grants will look into leveraging the Governor's fiber infrastructure proposal. The Governor's proposal for \$10 million for rural broadband development grants is still in limbo.

Jeff remarked federal broadband funding will be upcoming in the near future. These federal grants have lots of restrictions and programs have to be effectively tied together, including E-rate programs that may be more liberalized.

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) has issued an RFI to consider potential public-private partnerships to install and/or operate broadband conduit along major interstate and highway routes. Working with the Arizona Commerce Authority, ADOT is exploring partnerships that would lead to the development of middle-mile fiber-optic infrastructure across Arizona, creating more affordable opportunities for wired and wireless broadband connectivity in rural communities. Jeff stated they are looking for best models/ideas for this. There will be RFPs that follow up on this RFI. Jeff will send out a link to the RFI, which is noted in the Appendix Chat.

Steve Peters commented that the BATs could be provided with information on EDA and various federal grants and work on writing grant applications. Jeff responded that for the previous year's state rural broadband development grants, money (\$50,000) was set aside in grant applications for hiring consultants, and it is important to get the right people involved in writing the complicated grant applications. Steve noted Mark Goldstein prepared the directory of consultants (a task force resource mentioned at previous task force meetings), and there is a recommendation in the task force's preliminary recommendations document for the state government or other sources of funding to enable Arizona communities/institutions to contract with consultants for grant applications development.

### Arizona State Library

Nicole Umayam, Digital Inclusion Library Consultant at the Arizona State Library, reviewed her recent activities for the Arizona State Library.

The "Library Tech Helpline Service" has hired five librarian staff for this service and it is now up and running. This service provides tech help on computer troubleshooting, connecting people to discounted devices and Internet service offerings, and digital literacy training.

The State Land Department maintains a map of publicly available free Wi-Fi hotspots around the state. This Arizona State Library is working on constructing a user-friendly version of this map as well as a one-stop flyer and webpage for this. Nicole noted it is important that new broadband adopters are given easy-to-use information directly, such as printed resources if they do not have online access.

## ADE Update

Sophia Mayberry, Project Manager in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction at the Arizona Dept. of Education (ADE), stated (as noted at the last task force meeting) the main thing their office is working on is how to support the Governor's recent executive orders relating to supporting schools' distance learning plans and the impact of delaying school openings on school funding. The school districts have difficult decisions to make about how to continue instruction in the coming school year in the COVID-19 environment. Many teachers are worried about coming back to class during the pandemic.

The digital access capabilities of school districts vary widely: some have better solutions, some who did not have broadband and computer access when COVID-19 forced school closures still do not have good solutions, and some are coming up with innovative approaches.

## ACC Update

Lea Marquez Peterson, Commissioner at the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC), discussed the five issues that the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) Broadband Expansion Task Force, in which she participates:

1. A matrix of states that have shifted the Universal Service Fund (USF) funding to support broadband
2. State programs that are building out broadband infrastructure
3. How to work with the FCC on broadband for underserved areas
4. How to leverage electric and gas utilities for broadband goals
5. Rural broadband development benefits for education, healthcare, economic development, and quality of life

Lea is considering best practices for Arizona based on this NARUC task force activity. She will distribute her conclusions to the AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force when ready.

Jeff Sobotka commented the ACC could be involved in considering how to work with rural electric co-ops on providing broadband service, as the Mohave Electric Cooperative has recently launched. There are major capitalization and regulatory issues associated with this.

## Telehealth BAT

As discussed at a previous task force meeting, Jeff Sobotka explained that the state Telehealth Broadband Action Team is moving from discussing general issues to how to get things accomplished.

## **Subcommittee Activities**

### Education and Libraries Subcommittee

The Education and Libraries Subcommittee met on July 16th. Following are some items discussed at this subcommittee meeting.

John Kelly and Tracey Beal noted the ADE Technology task force is looking at how other states are addressing the digital divide over the long term as well as standards for how education will be delivered in the future.

Tracey Beal, Executive Director of School Connect, discussed School Connect's mission of building a village of support for schools by helping principals develop strategic plans and helping principals engage with parents, communities, businesses, and government. Steve Peters remarked he would like representatives on our task force to discuss more about what their organizations (like School Connect) do so we can take greater advantage of this on the task force going forward.

John Kelly noted that ADE distributed on July 15th a "Distance Learning Plan Template" that school districts must fill out by the end of July on how they plan to deliver distance learning during the 2020-21 school year. This must be approved by ADE for CARES Act funding of the school districts.

### Technology Subcommittee

The Technology Subcommittee held a meeting on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Three presentations were given at the meeting. Cynthia Dugger of Insight presented Insight's cost models for their "Distance Learning Managed Bundle" for students based on the in-home LX40 gateway router and the "Community Bundle" for the MP70 Wi-Fi gateway LTE router mounted on top of school buses located centrally. Robert Brown of Viasat presented on their connectivity solutions for schools and communities including different hotspot options with satellite connectivity to the Internet. John Lefante of DXC Technologies presented on DXC's end-to-end solution for devices for students including device procurement (leasing), provisioning, management, support, and maintenance, as well as the approximate costs for this solution. John Kelly, co-leader of the Technology Subcommittee, noted he would make the presentations available for the task force.

John Kelly stated he is not aware yet of the presentations to be given at the July 21<sup>st</sup> subcommittee meeting.

### Funding and Resources Subcommittee

Some members of the Funding and Resources Subcommittee met on July 17<sup>th</sup>. There was some discussion of how to make progress on completing the overall task force preliminary recommendations document, and that Joselyn Cousins will be presenting to the task force on the CRA on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

### Other Activities

Steve Peters noted that he delivered an invited presentation on this task force's activities to the Arizona Grantmakers Forum regarding southern Arizona's response to COVID-19. This is relevant to the task force's recommendation to solicit support from private foundations..

## **Next Steps**

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 am.

This week, the Technology subcommittee will meet on Tuesday July 21 at 9:30 am, the Education and Libraries subcommittee will meet on Thursday July 23 at 9:30 am, and the Funding and Resources subcommittee will meet on Friday July 24 at 10:00 am. The task force recommendations document will likely be discussed at these meetings.

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

### **Appendix: Chat from Zoom**

From Ilana Lowery to Everyone: (7:43 AM)

Maricopa County School Board Superintendent, Arizona Corporation Commission

From Jeff Sobotka to Everyone: (7:48 AM)

<https://azdot.gov/adot-news/state-seeks-input-leveraging-broadband-expansion-along-highways>

From Mauricio to Everyone: (8:08 AM)

Any thoughts of creating a QR Code for free resources? It can be widely shared with partners, stakeholders and posted in strategic stores/locations.