



## **March 1, 2021 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report**

### **Attendees**

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Robert Alvarado, Marni Anbar, Tracey Beal, Andrew Bevington, Wes Brownfield, Melissa Boydston, Kirk Busch, Gene Carl, Michael Cohen, Jerry Crow, Terence Ford, Rick Gibson, Ian Hathcock, Karen Hewitt, Steve Hill, Cindy Hogan, Shereka Jackson, John Kelly, Emery Layton, Tarma Liranzo, Ilana Lowery, Janet Major, Derek Masseth, Sophia Mayberry, Clarence McAllister, Ryan McCaigue, Frank Milstead, Georgina Monsalvo, Mauricio Orozco, Cody Pedersen, Lea Marquez Peterson, Lawrie Prickett, Paul Ross, Jeff Sobotka, Paul Stapleton-Smith, Karen Ziegler

### **Task Force Funding, Planning Committee, Subcommittees, Communicating FCC Programs, Participants List**

#### Task Force Funding

Steve Peters thanked Steve Hill of the Satellite Broadcasting & Communications Association and Melissa Boydston of Valley of the Sun United Way for their organizations' providing sponsorship funding for the AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force.

Steve is continuing to seek further required funding support for the task force, and has e-mailed all task force participants regarding his task force funding request package. He would appreciate funding from their organizations or other organizations they interact with to continue the task force's activities in 2021.

#### Task Force Planning Committee

Steve has assembled a task force planning committee to develop initiatives/priorities for the task force, identify next steps for implementing some of the recommendations in the task force report, and discuss how information on task force participants should be shared at overall task force Monday meetings. Steve will convene a meeting of the planning committee this week to begin developing a work plan.

Steve asked task force participants if they have any specific priorities they would like the planning committee to consider beyond what is in the task force recommendations report. Sophia Mayberry noted that the Arizona Dept. of Education has a student advisors council, and a key recommendation of the students is for consistent technology (e.g. computers) to be provided for all students. Jeff Sobotka added that there is a need for synchronization of technology across all state school districts, which can also provide significant cost savings when bulk buying is implemented. Steve noted that GenYES (a national organization discussed in the task force recommendations report) trains student leaders in information technology who then

help teachers in using technology in their schools, and this task force should consider how this program can engage Arizona students in new ways to benefit their schools and communities.

#### Task Force Subcommittees

Tracey Beal and Shereka Jackson have set up a subcommittee of the task force organizations that dispense devices (computers and hotspots) to schools/students/families to share information, help each other and develop synergies, and avoid duplication. This is intended to be a short-term subcommittee to develop ways of better working together.

This devices collaboration subcommittee will hold its initial Zoom meeting on Wednesday March 3rd at 2:00 pm. An e-mail was sent out inviting all task force participants that are interested to attend.

#### Communicating FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit and Lifeline Programs

The FCC has had a Lifeline program that provides a discount for low-income consumers on monthly telephone service and broadband Internet service from participating wireline and wireless service providers.

The FCC is about to launch a new Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program that provides a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible low-income households and up to \$75 per month for those on tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop/desktop/tablet from participating providers. On February 12th, the FCC hosted an EBB program roundtable to discuss how to make households aware of EBB and effectively enroll them as well as discuss issues related to service provider participation in this program. See Appendix 1 for an e-mail provided by Janet Major on EBB program rules and information, and the Appendix 2 Chat for links Mark Goldstein provided on the EBB program and associated fact sheet.

Steve Peters stated that he would like the task force to help organize navigators/intermediaries to promote and make it easier for low-income households to apply for the FCC EBB and Lifeline programs. Steve added that the Arizona State Library and United Way are doing some of this intermediary work now, but more coordination of a navigator program is needed. This will be important for Arizona to obtain as much support for low-income households as possible because the overall national funding support for these programs is limited.

Jeff Sobotka commented that the FCC EBB program total funding of \$3.2 billion is a short-term fix for low-income households requiring broadband, but the funding will only last several months up to a year depending on the number of households applying for the program. Gene Carl added that there needs to be focus on establishing long-term sustainable solutions for providing broadband services to low-income households. Steve agreed and noted there will still be an ongoing need for navigators to assist these households with broadband programs.

## **Updates: State Broadband Director, Telehealth, ADE, Sun Corridor Network, ACC**

### State Broadband Director Update

Jeff Sobotka, State Broadband Director at the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA), reported on his recent activities.

Jeff noted the Arizona Broadband Workshops that the ACA is partnering on with NTIA Broadband USA, USDA, and EDA. These workshops will be offered on the first Wednesday of every month from March through July, with the first workshop on March 3rd from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm (registration information for these workshops has been distributed to the task force). Jeff emphasized the importance of task force participants and rural communities attending these workshops to gain significant assistance in applying for federal broadband programs. NTIA received \$1.6 billion for broadband in the federal stimulus funding. Jeff stated such NTIA workshops have been held in the past in Louisiana and Idaho, and the Arizona workshops are the only state-based broadband workshops the NTIA will be offering in 2021.

Federal speakers at the March 3rd Arizona Broadband Workshop will include: Christine Firethunder of the Governor's Office who will discuss tribal broadband; Scott Woods of NTIA who is in charge of the NTIA broadband funding program; Don Williams, Sr. Broadband Specialist at NTIA, will provide technical advice on grant programs; and Karen Archer Perry who runs NTIA BroadbandUSA webinars. Local speakers at the March 3rd workshop will address broadband in different sectors: Stan Goligoski will discuss education in Yavapai County; Mark Smith of Smith Farms in Yuma will address agriculture; Toby Carter, the city manager from Bullhead City (where Mohave County Electric Co-op is providing a fiber network for high-speed broadband to all end-user locations) will discuss economic development; and Col. Frank Milstead, formerly of DPS, will discuss law enforcement.

Jeff stated that these Arizona Broadband Workshops will be recorded. He thanked Steve Peters and Mark Goldstein for their assistance in advertising these workshops.

Steve Peters asked if there is any news about the broadband bills pending in the state legislature that Jeff has discussed at previous task force meetings. Jeff responded he will let the task force know of any significant news in this regard. Jeff noted that there has been no major disagreement regarding the Governor's proposal for \$10 million for state Rural Broadband Development Grants (RBDGs), and he plans to move quickly on the RBDG program once it is approved and funding begins July 1, 2021. The state RBDGs will be very flexible for how the funding can be used. Jeff plans to work with service providers directly on this program, and he will be looking at how to design matching requirements and the maximum grant amount of the program. Jeff added that there may be support for expanding the RBDG program beyond \$10 million.

Mark Goldstein commented that the Arizona Technology Council has made broadband one of its top issues and will be lobbying for the ACA RBDGs program bill (HB 2808), the ability for rural electric co-ops to expand rights-of-way for broadband (HB 2036), and rights-of-way for ADOT fiber deployment along state highways (HB 2596). Mark stated there are six electric co-ops in Arizona that have extensive rights-of-way for deploying fiber and customer contracts, so this is a good potential approach to providing broadband solutions for rural communities. Steve Peters added the Seniors 2 Seniors program for providing computer and Internet training for seniors originated from work with electric co-ops, and he will be arranging a presentation on this program to the task force.

### Telehealth Update

Janet Major, Associate Director for Education & Facilities of the Arizona Telemedicine Program (ATP) and Chair of the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) Board, reported on her recent activities.

Janet stated she testified in favor of the RBDGs HB 2808 bill, and noted that telehealth is an important component of the Arizona economy.

The telehealth omnibus bill (HB 2454) is being revised, so the ATP associated fact sheet will also be revised.

Janet discussed the FCC roundtable on the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program, and Myron Lizer, Vice President of the Navajo Nation, participated in this roundtable. Janet recommends the task force assist with educating eligible low-income households about how to apply for this program. Janet remarked that the EBB program will increase competition among service providers to provide broadband services to households eligible for this program.

ATP is focusing on holding grant workshops. Janet and Jeff Sobotka organized another workshop on applying for Distance Learning & Telemedicine (DLT) grants. Jeff stated that it is important for organizations intending to apply for such federal grants to attend these workshops to understand the process needed to be successful.

The USDLA Public Policy Committee will be conducting a legislative series of webinars in April covering the Biden Dept. of Education vision, broadband equity legislative funding update, and a technology update on associated grant programs (see the Appendix Chat).

Steve Peters asked if federal grants for telemedicine have similar limitations as E-rate grants, and Janet responded that there are various types of grants for broadband and technology. Steve noted that seniors need devices and technical support to use telehealth. Janet responded that grants support both devices and tech support, and libraries can have grants to purchase devices and loan them out to patrons. Steve added that navigators could help with informing senior and the public about these programs. Wes Brownfield, Executive Director of the Arizona Rural Schools Association, explained that libraries and schools are community anchor institutions (CAIs) that can help communities expand their digital footprint, and his organization could help with this. Wes added that Navajo Chapter Houses have become eligible for E-rate funding, and could become important CAIs for their communities in education and telehealth. Mauricio Orozco, Community Engagement Manager of the Care1st Health Plan (an AHCCCS health plan), suggested students could be recruited to be navigators and utilities could also provide information to their customers about such programs.

### ADE Update

Sophia Mayberry, Project Manager in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction at the Arizona Dept. of Education (ADE), reported on recent ADE activities.

ADE will deliver a webinar on March 3rd for school districts to learn about the Sun Corridor Network (SCN). The Paradise Valley and Vail school districts are using the SCN now, and this webinar will inform other school districts on how they could benefit from the SCN. Steve Peters has forwarded an e-mail to the task force about this event, and Sophia put a link in the Appendix Chat about this. The webinar will be recorded and be available on the ADE website.

Sophia stated she is interested in the “Navigators” concept, and would like to talk to the task force about this. Jeff Sobotka suggested setting up a task force conference call on this topic. Steve Peters stated he would like to set up a task force subcommittee/team to collaborate on establishing navigators for the state.

## Sun Corridor Network Update

Derek Masseth, Executive Director of the Sun Corridor Network (SCN), reported on recent SCN activities.

Derek looks forward to participating in the ADE webinar on the SCN discussed above by Sophia Mayberry.

The SCN is considering how to make use of the substantial federal broadband grant funding coming available for universities and communities.

Derek is involved in outreach with Flagstaff and Nogales regarding the ADOT fiber to be deployed along I-17 and I-19.

The SCN is advancing the deployment of EduRoam for more communities as well the use of CBRS in a “to and through” schools approach to connect students.

The SCN has moved from being headquartered at the University of Arizona to become a department at ASU (legally and financially). Derek said a primary reason this was done is because ASU has a broader outreach with communities, which will align better with SCN future goals. The SCN department will report to Lev Gonick, ASU CIO, who is the current Chair of the SCN Board.

Steve Peters noted that the task force report recommended working on an SCN strategic plan for its future role in the state.

## ACC Update

Lea Marquez Peterson, Commissioner and Chair of the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC), reported on her recent activities.

Lea stated the ACC is continuing work on its open docket regarding reforming the Arizona Universal Service Fund (AUSF) to support broadband services in high-cost rural areas. The AUSF will be discussed at an ACC meeting on March 23rd (see the Appendix Chat for Lea’s description of the AUSF proposed discussion at this meeting). The AUSF currently collects \$1.2 million per year (\$460,000 is currently unused), and there are 315 Category 1 & Category 2 service providers who could become eligible for a reformed AUSF program.

Lea will be speaking tomorrow to the Pascua Yaqui tribe about broadband issues.

## **Next Steps**

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, March 8th at 7:30 am.

As noted above: 1) the first Arizona Broadband Workshop will be held on Wednesday, March 3rd at 10:00 am; 2) the ADE webinar on the Sun Corridor Network will be held on Wednesday March 3rd at 4:00 pm; and 3) the task force Devices Collaboration subcommittee meeting will be held on Wednesday March 3rd at 2:00 pm.

Melissa Boydston announced The United Way is holding its 96th anniversary event on March 26th focusing on key issues for the next five years, including grant funding processes. Steve Peters will forward an e-mail about this event, and Melissa Boydston may again present to the task force about current United Way digital access activities.

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

## **Appendix 1: Janet Major March 1st E-mail on Emergency Broadband Benefit Program Rules and Information**

Update from the FCC on the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program:

Last week the FCC released the [Order](#) that creates the eligibility criteria and other important rules for the Emergency Broadband Benefit. The agency also released a fact sheet that can be found here: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-370324A1.pdf>

A household is eligible if one member of the household:

- Qualifies for the Lifeline program.
- Receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, or did so in the 2019-2020 school year.
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year.
- Experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020, and the household had a total income in 2020 below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers.
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating providers' existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per eligible household.

The FCC has not established a start date for consumer enrollment. Please check our website, [www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit](http://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit), regularly for the latest information.

### **Information for Providers**

Providers that are interested in participating in the program can learn more by visiting:

<https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-program>

Interested providers can also learn more and sign up for a webinar hosted by the Universal Service Administrative Co. (USAC), the Emergency Broadband Benefit program administrator, by visiting:

<https://www.usac.org/about/emergency-broadband-benefit-program>

## **Appendix 2: Chat from Zoom**

Paul Ross to Everyone (7:31 AM)  
Tangentially connected

Jeff Sobotka to Everyone (7:34 AM)

<https://www.azcommerce.com/broadband/arizona-broadband-workshops/>

Paul Ross to Everyone (7:37 AM)

This meeting is a good way to kick off the week with like minds moving forward for the benefit of our communities representing a diverse range of interests and organizations. :-)

John Kelly to Everyone (7:50 AM)

We had the elec coops present to the tech subcommittee several months ago. I'm sure they would be happy to circle back.

Wes Brownfield to Everyone (7:50 AM)

So sorry I'm late this AM...had managed to hide the the access code from myself...again

Jeff Sobotka to Everyone (7:57 AM)

John, I think getting GCSECA to speak on this call would be great. Please do follow up with them to give an overview of their members and Broadband initiatives.

Mark Goldstein to Everyone (7:59 AM)

Senators Collins, Rosen Introduce Legislation to Increase Access to Broadband Services to Rural Americans providing up to \$15 billion in matching grants to help bring high-speed Internet directly to homes and businesses. <https://www.collins.senate.gov/newsroom/senators-collins-rosen-introduce-legislation-increase-access-broadband-services-rural>

John Kelly to Everyone (7:59 AM)

Will do, Jeff.

Lea Marquez Peterson to Everyone (7:59 AM)

Quick update: I've placed the Az Univ Serv Fund on the Az Corp Commission agenda on March 23rd. Arizona Corporation Commission (T-00000A-20-0336) – In the matter of Commission investigation into possible modification to the Arizona Universal Service Fund High Cost Fund Rules; Commission discussion, consideration, but no vote on a proposal from Chairwoman Lea Marquez Peterson to transition the Arizona Universal Service Fund High Cost Fund (Title 14, Chapter 2, Article 12, Part A of Arizona Administrative Code) to a rural broadband development grant or fund, to help bridge the digital divide between urban and rural communities in Arizona and deliver universal, equal, and equitable access to high-speed internet across the state, including tribal and rural communities where last-mile and middle-mile infrastructure has been underprovided.

Sophia Mayberry to Everyone (8:00 AM)

I am very interested in the idea of navigators.

Cindy Hogan to Everyone (8:00 AM)

Very much so!

Wes Brownfield to Everyone (8:00 AM)

Janet, There is always the local school. Tech and grant savvy, built in community connects, and a real interest in expanding connection, devices, and access.

Sophia Mayberry to Everyone (8:01 AM)

And I am here Steve :)

Do we need a separate meeting for those interested in navigators?

Thiers! Navajo nation brought that to the state.

Cindy Hogan to Everyone (8:03 AM)

I heard Amado is doing an amazing job with vaccines - sounds like a very organized community

Tracey Beal to Everyone (8:04 AM)

Nicole Umayam from the State Library has a great model of Navigators

Sophia Mayberry to Everyone (8:04 AM)

That is the model I would think we could build out

Cindy Hogan to Everyone (8:04 AM)

Yes, Nicole even has training prototypes!

Sophia Mayberry to Everyone (8:05 AM)

Mauricio have you spoken to Eric Tuaeone about the internship idea?

Paul Ross to Everyone (8:05 AM)

In the 1990s I worked on a project that provided a remote phone/voicemail box for people in need who did not have a fixed address. Softphones are now an option to connect people using broadband assets.

Tracey Beal to Everyone (8:06 AM)

Sophia, I think so too! Our subcommittee for the Tech Task Force has great ideas for Navigators and Virtual Tutoring

Janet Major to Everyone (8:09 AM)

[file: Poly Grant Assistance Program Overview.pdf]

Janet Major to Everyone (8:09 AM)

[file: USDLA Webinar 2-19-21.pdf]

Wes Brownfield to Everyone (8:09 AM)

I agree about the importance of Navigator training!

Cindy Hogan to Everyone (8:10 AM)

I would be VERY interested in a break-out group re: navigators. I will help you Sophia, for sure!

Janet Major to Everyone (8:10 AM)

Grant Writing Workshop 2-19-21 Archived recording available soon @ <https://usdla.org/webinars/>

Sophia Mayberry to Everyone (8:10 AM)



Sun Corridor Network Webinar: [https://azed.gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_d0iWGY\\_UTY6j3PQ6uUdJfQ](https://azed.gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_d0iWGY_UTY6j3PQ6uUdJfQ)

Melissa Boydston to Everyone (8:11 AM)

Father Matters and Cartwright School District are utilizing Navigators now, we should include them in the conversation - Sophia count me in!

Janet Major to Everyone (8:11 AM)

NEW SWTRC Funding Opportunities link

[https://southwesttrc.org/resources/funding\\_opportunities](https://southwesttrc.org/resources/funding_opportunities)

Janet Major to Everyone (8:12 AM)

USDLA Public Policy Committee Legislative Series April 2021

April 9, 16, 23 on the following Topics:

1.Link to Biden DOE Report – what is the vision of this new administration? Do we provide this link and make this a Review?

<https://joebiden.com/education/>

2.Broadband Inequity Legislative Funding Update – possibly NTIA panel/FCC member on the panel

3. Technology - Update and focus on the NSF grants, etc

Please join us - register once for the series. Link will be here soon: <https://usdla.org/webinars/>

Sophia Mayberry to Everyone (8:15 AM)

I captured all the interest in navigators thanks!

Cindy Hogan to Everyone (8:16 AM)

Excellent, thanks Sophia!

Janet Major to Everyone (8:17 AM)

me too - this is a great collaboration!

Paul Ross to Everyone (8:18 AM)

I will be there, looking forward to it.

Janet Major to Everyone (8:22 AM)

its not sustainable but it's good!

Janet Major to Everyone (8:23 AM)

[file: ATP Telehealth Fact Sheet.pdf]

Georgina Monsalvo to Everyone (8:23 AM)

Have to jump a bit earlier today. Thanks Steve and good day everyone!

Janet Major to Everyone (8:26 AM)

thanks Sophia

Tracey Beal to Everyone (8:27 AM)

Really insightful

Paul Ross to Everyone (8:27 AM)

Schools and colleges are experiencing major supply issues from vendors. In some cases timelines are now extending out to 120 days. Shortage of screens at present for laptops.

Melissa Boydston to Everyone (8:28 AM)

AZStrut?

Cindy Hogan to Everyone (8:28 AM)

<https://www.genyes.com>

Shereka Jackson to Everyone (8:28 AM)

Having the same will allow them to work together and support each other. They will ask a friend before asking a parents or teacher.

Paul Ross to Everyone (8:28 AM)

If anyone is looking for an IT in Education conference check out ISTE to see what schools are doing.

Mark Goldstein to Everyone (8:28 AM)

FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit Program Fact Sheet <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-emergency-broadband-benefit-program-fact-sheet>

Mark Goldstein to Everyone (8:30 AM)

Report and order as of 2/26 <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-adopts-report-and-order-emergency-broadband-benefit-program-0>