

March 30, 2020 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Michael Amick, Melissa Armas, Jerry Crow, Tim Harrington, Holly Henley, John Kelly, Derek Masseth, Mala Muralidharan, Lea Marquez Peterson, Alan Pruitt, Tracy Rexroat, Daniel Schwiebert, Jeff Sobotka, Dan Stormont, Graham Taylor, Nicole Umayam, Nan Williams, Karen Ziegler

COVID-19 Task Force Website Structure and Name of Project

Steve Peters overviewed the website he has been creating (hosted on the ATIC/AZBSN website) for this COVID-19 project. The current webpages he is using are: "About", "Meetings", "Resources", "Updates", "Contacts", "Priorities", "Leadership". Henry Goldberg asked where the activities/reports of the subcommittees would be posted, and Steve responded these would be posted with the COVID team pages under *Minutes* webpage. Mala Muralidharan commented that the "About" page should use the official name of this project and be consistent throughout the website.

The attendees agreed on the following name for this project that best captures the structure and purpose of this project: "AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force".

Henry Goldberg suggested that the term "digital" be defined on the "About" webpage to include broadband Internet access, end-user devices (e.g. computers, laptops, smart phones), other digital equipment (routers, hotspots, security cameras, telemedicine hardware/software, etc.), and digital content resources.

Tim Harrington commented the COVID-19 crisis will likely be a pivot point for digital needs assessments, planning, and public resources in the future.

Purpose and Priorities Statements on the Website

Steve reviewed the purpose statement on the "About" webpage and some key collaborators shown. John Kelly commented the website should link to the "Arizona Together" website to provide information for the general public. Steve responded that the website is both for summarizing internal work done for by this task force as well as providing information for the public.

Steve discussed the four priorities of the task force shown on the website:

- Facilitate collaboration, coordination, information sharing and communication among key public, private and nonprofit stakeholders
- Collaborate on priority initiatives for schools, libraries, telemedicine, communities, and more
- Develop a statewide COVID-19 strategy to connect, schools, universities, community colleges, students, homes, and communities
- Identify and advocate for funding sources for COVID-19 Projects

Jeff Sobotka commented that this task force must focus on providing useful information to the target audience of rural communities, school districts, etc. Karen Ziegler agreed that the project website should just have links to other sites that provide information for the general public.

Task Force Actions

Steve discussed proposed next actions for the task force including a newsletter describing the creation of this taskforce, a webinar to discuss this task force and inviting key stakeholders to participate, the formation of appropriate subcommittees to identify needs and recommendations, and the posting of broadband/digital resources information on the website. Steve mentioned there are currently 1100 people on his mailing list for the newsletter and webinar invitations.

Jeff Sobotka emphasized that the resources information on the website should be clearly visible and easy to access for the target audience (rural communities, school districts, etc.). Mark Goldstein added the broadband/digital resources we should be able to provide will be more comprehensive than that available on other Arizona websites such as "Arizona Forward".

Henry Goldberg stated that it will be important to form the task force subcommittees soon so that we can provide necessary recommendations that school districts and communities can implement to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Mala Muralidharan, Karen Ziegler, and Mark Goldstein suggested that the first webinar be done as soon as possible to invite stakeholders to participate in the task force and subcommittees.

Karen Ziegler noted there will be tens of millions of dollars coming to Arizona from the federal government COVID-19 stimulus bill CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act for educational technology. John Kelly provided a summary of the CARES Act federal funding for education:

- \$30.75 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund which includes:
 - \$3 billion in flexible funding to governors for K-12 and higher education
 - \$14.25 billion to institutions of higher education
 - \$13.5 billion to state education agencies and local education agencies

Funds should be allocated to local education agencies based on the relative share of federal Title 1 funding they received last year.

- \$8.8 billion for the federal child nutrition programs
- \$100 million for Project School Emergency Response to Violence to address the impact of this pandemic on students, including their mental health.

Mala Muralidharan added the CARES Act also allocates additional funding to the Rural Utilities Service for their distance learning, telemedicine, and broadband programs.

Jeff Sobotka responded that the decisions on the use of this federal education funding will be made at the state level by the Governor's policy advisors, the Legislature, and the Arizona Department of Administration's Office of Grants and Federal Resources. Jeff and Karen Ziegler stated the AZBSN COVID-19 Task Force could provide them guidance on the best use of this funding. Jeff noted this federal stimulus funding and the Governor's proposed \$10 million broadband funding for rural communities are mid-term issues for this task force. Jeff and Mala Muralidharan emphasized this task force should be focusing now on short-term actions that can be taken to address the digital solutions required in the COVID-19 crisis.

Henry Goldberg commented this task force must understand the detailed needs of the school districts/colleges/universities for broadband access and devices for different rural communities/counties before it can make appropriate recommendations for digital solutions and the funding required. Jeff Sobotka responded that Milan Eaton has told him there are about 3000 schools (public, charter, private) in the state and only 110 of these schools have reached out with issues they are having. Jeff would like to communicate with all the schools about their needs. Steve noted the letter (mentioned at our March 27th task force meeting) from 50 education leaders around the state asking the legislature to approve emergency funding for school districts to solve the digital-divide challenge during the school closures. Steve added there are various state organizations that could be contacted for needs input such as: Arizona Business & Education Coalition, Arizona Rural Schools Association, and the Arizona School Boards Association. Nan Williams, Executive Director of the Arizona Technology in Education Association (AzTEA), stated she meets with the school CIO's monthly and can contact them if Jeff and Steve provide information to her about their request for information. Dan Stormont added that school computer science teachers could also be advocates for needs/funding.

John Kelly alerted the task force that Governor Ducey and Kathy Hoffman, Superintendent of Public Instruction, announced today the extension of Arizona school closures through the end of the school year.

Task Force Subcommittees

Steve proposed the task force establish the following subcommittees that would develop clear strategies to identify needs, barriers, and recommendations:

- Education
- Libraries
- Telemedicine
- Communities (including telework and economic issues)
- Service Providers
- Funding
- Website

Karen Ziegler commented she will handle the Public Safety area so don't need a subcommittee for that, and that Education is the highest priority. Mala Muralidharan explained that Education and Libraries should be separate subcommittees because libraries have different issues than schools.

Alan Pruitt stated western Arizona has economic development plans but those are not immediate needs. The U.S. Economic Development Administration requires them to do business continuity planning, which is particularly important during the COVID-19 crisis. The

Department of Homeland Security Ready.gov website provides templates/procedures for business continuity planning in disasters/emergencies (<https://www.ready.gov/business/implementation/IT>). Henry Goldberg remarked that business continuity in this crisis would require employees to be able to telework from home with appropriate security. Steve asked Jerry Crow if the cybersecurity organizations he is involved with could help with business continuity, and Jerry said he will consider this.

Mark Goldstein remarked that we do not need a Website subcommittee, rather this is a task that should be managed by Steve with inputs from others.

Steve suggested a collaborative platform be used to facilitate communications within the subcommittees. Mark Goldstein suggested the “Slack” platform, Melissa Armas suggested the “Airtable” platform, and Dan Stormont Microsoft also offers a “Teams” platform.

Steve concluded saying each subcommittee will require a champion/leader. He would like task force committee members to e-mail him this week indicating the subcommittee(s) they would like to serve on.

Next Steps

Steve will be coordinating regular AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force meetings to make rapid progress on this work during the COVID-19 crisis. The next meetings will be on Monday April 6th and April 13th at 7:30 am. Subcommittee meetings will be organized separately once the subcommittees are formed.

Steve will prepare a newsletter and organize a webinar in the near future.

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

Chat from Zoom

- 07:31:45 From Malavika Muralidharan : Steve also could you use AZ StRUT this way consistently
- 07:48:35 From Mark Goldstein : ITU Working Group on Epidemic Preparedness - <https://broadbandcommission.org/workinggroups/Pages/Epidemic-Preparedness.aspx>
- 07:49:44 From Dr. Tim J Harrington : COVID-19 Taskforce makes great sense
- 07:50:29 From Dr. Tim J Harrington : AZBSN - COVID-19 Digital Access Taskforce
- 07:53:22 From Melissa : AZBSN - COVID-19 Digital Access Taskforce
- 07:53:23 From Nan AzTEA : I like that Henry
- 07:53:33 From Melissa : Yes
- 07:53:43 From Lea Marquez Peterson : Sounds good to me
- 07:53:47 From Michael Amick Pima Community College : agree
- 07:54:23 From tracy : sounds good to me too

- 07:54:55 From JohnKelly : In time, hopefully sooner rather than later, the reference to COVID-19 will be less relevant. The event of the virus revealed the digital access problems which is the long term project.
- 08:02:54 From Dr. Tim J Harrington : Focus specifically on Digital Access services and resources for the Public - COVID-19 is the pivot and creating an open and public awareness of need. COVID-19 is a trigger and likely defining experience going forward for an indefinite future... For example, Yavapai County education leaders need to know who to contact, where to go, how they can deliver resources to their stakeholders... this is the case for all county service providers
- 08:04:43 From JohnKelly : Announcement coming: Schools to be closed for balance of the school year.
- 08:05:30 From JohnKelly : <https://azgovernor.gov/governor/news/2020/03/governor-ducey-superintendent-hoffman-announce-extension-school-closures>
- 08:05:42 From Alan Pruitt : I think that an element of PROACTIVE measures should be advocated on the website such as Ready.Gov IT Disaster Recovery Planning - <https://www.ready.gov/business/implementation/IT>
- 08:07:50 From Jeff Sobotka : Wow. I heard the schools closing was for the year was coming. Makes sense to give everyone certainty as to how to plan their lives.
- 08:08:26 From Dan Stormont : That's good to know, thanks John!
- 08:09:14 From JohnKelly : I wonder how that changes the problem of providing access - digital or otherwise -- to educational resources for the next 7 weeks (and beyond, of course). I predict 1:1 school computing will be a rising strategy for many school districts (not that bold a prediction)
- 08:10:23 From JohnKelly : Thanks for sharing the Covid-19 info on the AZ 911 website.
- 08:11:10 From Nan AzTEA : A newsletter is a quick way to show that there are things in the works
- 08:12:29 From Dr. Tim J Harrington : Do we have access to delivery service companies directly... too many areas with remote populations that do not have broadband access other than from satellite (Hughes, Dish, other?) which are generally unaffordable for the poverty-leave, below poverty-level populations which are served by many of the small privates and public charters (on the board for Mountain Oak Charter School and feel this 1st hand).
- 08:15:29 From Nan AzTEA : Agree!
- 08:20:48 From Malavika Muralidharan : Sections of the bill of interest and other bills which have Broadband related language.
 * "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act" CARES Act
 1) p. 617+ allocates more funds to RUS: RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE -- DISTANCE LEARNING, TELEMEDICINE, AND BROADBAND PROGRAM: For an additional amount for "Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband Program", \$25,000,000, to remain available until expended, to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, domestically or internationally, for telemedicine and distance learning services in rural areas....
 2) p. 622+ allocates more funds to RUS: For an additional amount for grants under the pilot program established under section 779 of Public Law 115–141[*], to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, \$100,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2021: Provided, That at least 90 percent of the households to be served

by a project receiving a grant shall be in a rural area without sufficient access to broadband....

- 08:21:00 From Malavika Muralidharan : Just an example
- 08:22:55 From tracy : Can Nicole share that map?
- 08:24:57 From Melissa : <https://maps.ruralopportunitymap.us/broadband-access-map>
- 08:25:11 From JohnKelly : Here is an excerpt from a summary of the CARES Act related to ed funding: CARES Act – Education
 - \$30.75 billion for
 - o \$3 billion in flexible funding to governors for K-12 and higher education
 - o \$14.25 billion to institutions of higher education
 - o \$13.5 billion to state education agencies and local education agencies
 - Funds should be allocated to local education agencies based on the relative share of federal Title 1 funding they received last year
- \$8.8 billion for the federal child nutrition programs
- \$100 million for Project School Emergency Response to Violence to address the impact of this pandemic on students, including their mental health
- 08:25:40 From Dr. Tim J Harrington : Most Small District Leaders (some as small as a district of 1) are looking to Department of Ed for guidance and don't know who to reach out to beyond the district, nor have their own personal bandwidth... they are 1 or 2 handling communications to 100s
- 08:26:37 From Nan AzTEA : nanwilli@gmail.com
- 08:27:51 From Malavika Muralidharan : Libraries and WiFi availability <https://sites.google.com/view/azdigitalinclusion/covid-19-library-resources/library-wifi-map?authuser=0>
- 08:28:58 From Holly Henley : I'll work with Mala on the Libraries group.
- 08:30:29 From Dan Stormont : John, has information about CARES Act funding been shared with CSTA-AZ? The CS teachers would be good ones to push action by schools and districts from the bottom up?
- 08:31:13 From Lea Marquez Peterson : Collaboration platform - I suggest Asana to track subcommittees, files and communication
- 08:31:41 From Jeff Sobotka : I need to drop. Stay Safe!
- 08:35:26 From JohnKelly : Dan, I don't know. But I agree the education community will need to identify the right solutions for the right LEA's. I think the bulk of the ed\$ will be distributed through the Title 1 formula funding.
- 08:35:49 From Lea Marquez Peterson : I have to drop off. Stay healthy everyone!
- 08:37:08 From JohnKelly : Happy to participate in the Ed work group
- 08:37:14 From JohnKelly : Be well all!
- 08:39:42 From Holly Henley : I agree with Mala. We can coordinate with the Education work group but Libraries should be separate.
- 08:39:45 From Melissa : Airtable is great
- 08:40:18 From Mark Goldstein : slack channels
- 08:40:19 From tracy : we use the free version of slack for our office

- 08:40:35 From Dan Stormont : Slack generally works well.
- 08:40:57 From tracy : agree with moving ahead
- 08:41:49 From Dan Stormont : My employer would want me to mention Teams. :)
Currently free, I believe,
- 08:41:54 From Melissa : Thank you!!!
- 08:41:54 From Alan Pruitt : Steve - Please send the committees to us
- 08:42:00 From tracy : stay safe