



May 11, 2020, AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Melissa Armas, Sherri Bakker, Tracey Beal, Kirk Busch, Michael Cohen, Steve Crooks, Jerry Crow, Mark Dallmeier, Terence Ford, Ian Hathcock, Holly Henley, Steve Hill, Brittany Holmes, Bob Jacobson, John Kelly, Ilana Lowery, Janet Major, Sophia Mayberry, Derek Masseth, Jennifer Mellor, Peter Newbegin, Mala Muralidharan, Cody Pedersen, Lea Marquez Peterson, Lynda Santoro, Jeff Sobotka, Graham Taylor, Cory TerEick, Nicole Umayam, Nan Williams, Rick Yanke, Karen Ziegler

Task Force Subcommittees and Website

Steve Peters asked people who haven't already signed up to participate in one of the subcommittees (Education & Libraries, Communities, Technology, Funding/Resources) to contact him if they are interested in being on one or more of those teams.

Steve explained that he has created a "Resources" webpage for the COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force website. This webpage will include relevant resource information received as a result of this task force's activities.

Steve thanked Cory TerEick (MSS) and Terence Ford (Insight) for their assistance in mobilizing the subcommittees and work in getting the Microsoft Teams collaboration platform functional for this task force (which should be up and running soon).

Updates: State BB Director, State Library, Telehealth, ADE, ACC

State Broadband Director Update

Jeff Sobotka, State Broadband Director, provided an update on his current activities. His initial focus was on getting hotspots to students and the Cisco Wi-Fi extension pilot for libraries (discussed at previous task force meetings), which has largely been handled. He has also been working with ATNI and NTUA Wireless to provide free wireless data service on the Navajo Nation under an FCC temporary spectrum use permit.

Jeff is focusing now on how Arizona can be best-positioned to apply for federal grants/loans programs. The federal grants Jeff is considering are: 1) Economic Development Administration (in US Dept. of Commerce) grants; 2) CARES Act grants for education and telemedicine; 3) USDA Broadband ReConnect grants and Distance Learning & Telemedicine grants; 4) FCC grants – several communities have received small grants; and 5) there is a large infrastructure bill (including \$30 - \$80 billion for broadband) being considered in Congress. Jeff is also looking

at how the Governor's proposed state funding for broadband can be used. He is in consultation with Lev Gonick of ASU and Mala Muralidharan/Nicole Umayam of the Arizona State Library who have expertise on federal grant programs.

Jeff emphasized that it is important the grants received are used properly to create sustainable infrastructure. He is working with some subject matter experts (e.g. Janet Major on telemedicine) to help communities and organizations write grant applications. Jeff suggested this task force could provide an important function in providing a list of grant writers with appropriate expertise for this purpose. Karen Ziegler commented the Office of Grants and Federal Resources at the Arizona Dept. of Administration is being transitioned to the Governor's Economic Recovery Management Team, and they are looking for grant writers to assist them. Lea Marquez Peterson asked if Keith Watkins at the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA) has established grant writing assistance for rural communities, and Jeff responded James Kerr may be assisting Keith Watkins with this. Mark Goldstein added the Arizona Grantmakers Forum explores opportunities for philanthropies to partner with government (discussed in the Funding/Resources subcommittee).

Steve Peters asked if the ACA can accept donations of funds for grant writing, and Jeff responded he was not sure about the legality of this. Jeff stated if this task force raises funds for grant writers, ATIC or GAZEL could possibly hire grant writers. Mark Goldstein added that there are professional grant writers where appropriate arrangements need to be made as to how they get paid, and there also may be some who do this work pro-bono. Steve Peters suggested the task force may create a fund to pay grant writers for schools, libraries, and communities that need assistance with this.

Arizona State Library and Federal Update

Mala Muralidharan, E-rate Administrator for Public Libraries at the Arizona State Library, provided an update on her activities.

Arizona E-rate applications totaled \$96 million for the 2020-21 fiscal year (and there may be some additional late applications). Several applied as a consortium of schools and libraries, so it is hard to separate the applications amounts for schools vs. libraries. Nationwide, there were 38,207 applications totaling \$2.91 billion -- \$1.74 billion was for Category 1 and \$1.17 billion was for Category 2 funding.

The Universal Service Administration Company (USAC) has four divisions: Schools and Libraries E-Rate Program; Rural Health Care; Lifeline; and High Cost. Catriona Ayers, the VP of the Schools and Libraries E-Rate Program since the inception of the E-Rate Program, has been moved to VP of Shared Services, and Craig Davis is the new VP of the E-Rate Program. Davis has worked with USAC since 2002 in the High Cost and Rural Health programs.

Five state public libraries received the Cisco Wi-Fi boosters (discussed at previous task force meetings) and work is underway on the 6th. The Arizona State Library is also assessing the need in other libraries around the state.

Mala also provided a detailed written update on federal activities impacting schools and libraries that will be uploaded on the task force website.

Arizona Telemedicine Program Update

Janet Major, Associate Director of Education & Facilities for the Arizona Telemedicine Program, stated there will be a grant writing for USDA telemedicine grants webinar on May 20th (see the Chat). She suggested students in health programs at universities may be able to assist with grant writing. Derek Masseth, Chief Technology Officer at the University of Arizona and Executive Director of the Sun Corridor Network, remarked the University of Arizona and Sun Corridor Network may be able to provide assistance with grant applications.

Janet also noted there will be a SHLB webinar titled “Broadband on the Hill: A Legislative Update” on May 29th (see the Chat). Steve added he will include information on these webinars on the task force website.

Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Update

Sophia Mayberry, Project Manager in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction at ADE, stated the ADE has worked on completing the E-rate grant applications for schools (mentioned by Mala Muralidharan). ADE will be providing guidance by the end of May on the re-opening of schools.

Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) Update

Lea Marquez Peterson, ACC Commissioner, explained the ACC regulates the state’s investor-owned utilities and has a limited role in regulating telecommunications service providers.

Lea noted she is appointed to be a member of the National Association of Regulatory Commissioners (NARUC) Presidential Broadband Expansion Task Force. This NARUC task force will study mechanisms to roll out broadband services to unserved areas. The task force has been inactive for a while with the COVID-19 outbreak, but is now re-invigorated. She will reach out to Steve Peters and this AZBSN task force if she needs to gather Arizona broadband information for the NARUC task force.

Subcommittees Activities

Education and Libraries Subcommittee

Mala Muralidharan, Nan Williams, and Nicole Umayam, the Champions of the Education and Libraries Subcommittee, discussed the activities of this subcommittee. Mala explained it was decided to combine Education and Libraries into one subcommittee because of common issues and goals in areas such as device distribution, Internet access, technical support, and optimal digital access strategies.

The first meeting of the subcommittee was held on May 8th, and about 25 team members attended. The subcommittee focused on three goals: two short-medium term (30 to 60 days) and one long-term (90 days):

- 1) Data about Wi-Fi availability for data-driven decision making
- 2) Augmenting Internet access by installing Wi-Fi boosters, enabling hotspots, and increasing data plans of service providers
- 3) Optimizing and sharing resources (long-term goal).

Nicole commented that the subcommittee would like to provide information to schools and libraries on where Wi-Fi access is available and on discount service provider Internet access plans. Mala stated the Arizona State Library Wi-Fi map may be expanded to include other locations with free public Wi-Fi access.

Nan noted there is a major need for centralized technical support for students, families, and individuals to assist with using devices, Internet access, and navigating portals for school work or other needs (e.g. government, health care). Nicole remarked library staff and teachers are meeting some of these tech support needs now on an ad-hoc basis. Jeff Sobotka commented he has talked to County School Superintendents who say they are thinly-staffed and require technical support/help desk assistance. Jeff added that the Department of Economic Security also requires help desk support for people applying for unemployment insurance. Steve Peters added that a lot of support resources are needed beyond connectivity. Terence Ford stated Insight does a lot of work related to technical support.

Mala stated future meetings of the Education and Libraries Subcommittee will be held on Thursdays at 9:30 am. Notes on these meetings will be uploaded to the task force website.

Funding/Resources Subcommittee

Lea Marquez Peterson, Champion of the Funding/Resources Subcommittee, stated there have been two meetings of this subcommittee.

The subcommittee established the goal to identify and facilitate funding and resources for communities to obtain Wi-Fi access, hotspots, and devices in the next 60 days. Long-term federal/state funding sources will be handled by the Arizona Commerce Authority broadband team.

The subcommittee identified various foundations for grant applications, and that grant writers would be needed to apply for such grants. Potential corporate sponsors/funders and other resources such as the Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation and Az StRUT for donations were also identified. They also discussed with Mala Muralidharan the cost of providing Wi-Fi access outside libraries (estimated \$2500 total cost per library).

Lea noted the Funding/Resources Subcommittee will be holding meetings on Fridays at 10:00 am.

Steve Peters added he will send out notices of upcoming meetings of the subcommittees, and the “Communities” and “Technology” subcommittees still need to get started with meetings.

United Way, ConnectAllStudents, Greater Phx Chamber, Telehealth

United Way of Southern Arizona Cradle to Career Partnership

Peter Newbegin, Cradle to Career Impact and Improvement Director, described their organization as a partnership of education, community, and business leaders that is working with school districts to provide effective solutions for students’ progress. During the COVID-19 crisis, they are focused on some immediate needs of school districts: students working offline, volunteers to allow parents to connect to teachers, and volunteers for schools that need them.

Common Sense Media ConnectAllStudents Campaign

Ilana Lowery, Arizona Director of Common Sense Media, has created the “ConnectAllStudents” campaign to close the digital divide and make sure that every family has equal access to broadband. The campaign calls on Congress to fund devices and broadband service so all students can connect to distance learning this school year.

The "ConnectAllStudents" campaign would like to partner with the AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force to raise awareness in the federal government about digital access issues. Ilana will forward an article about their campaign to post on the task force website.

Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation

Jennifer Mellor, Chief Innovation Officer of the Greater Phoenix Chamber, explained their foundation has launched a laptop drive a few weeks ago in partnership with Data Doctors, which refurbishes the laptops free of charge. They are working with a list of schools that have applied for laptop donations. They are also working with the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation to bring national awareness to this issue.

Telehealth

Jeff Sobotka stated he is working with three telehealth organizations including the Telehealth Broadband Action Team (discussed at the May 4th task force meeting). He recommends people attend the webinars on grant writing because USDA grant applications are complicated.

Janet Major stated the Arizona Department of Health Services has also started a telehealth action group. The US Distance Learning Association is hosting a webinar this Friday May 15th at 10:00 am on grant writing (see the Chat for registration link).

Next Steps

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, May 18th at 7:30 am, and subsequent overall task force meeting will be held on Monday mornings for at least the following two weeks.

Mark Goldstein, Chair of the Arizona Telecommunications and Information Council (ATIC), stated there is an ATIC Board Meeting on Wednesday May 13th at 12:00 pm, and all interested are invited to attend.

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

Appendix: Chat from Zoom

07:44:38 From Janet Major : usda grant writing event Wednesday May 20 @12pm
www.telemedicine.arizona.edu/webinar

07:46:29 From Janet Major : School Health & Libraries Webinar Coalition "Broadband on the Hill: A Legislative Update" May 29 1pm ET

07:46:38 From Janet Major :
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/8815887903940/WN_GECsIVMITxqhVvC3M0FPWQ to register

07:48:43 From Bob Jacobson : Economic Development Administration

07:48:58 From Bob Jacobson : Part of US Commerce Dept.

07:50:23 From NicoleUmayam : Jeff, are you hearing of anyone addressing affordability of broadband service?

07:51:25 From Bob Jacobson : We're considering a USDA DLT grant in Patagonia.

07:52:09 From Janet Major : <https://www.learn.designapply.com/> is a great professional grant writing resource and will be on our panel May 20th

07:53:28 From Bob Jacobson : USDA DLT grants are limited in terms of broadband support to 20% of the total grant application. The rest must be for tangible goods.

07:55:12 From Mark Goldstein : Arizona Grantmakers Forum - <https://arizonagrantmakersforum.org/>

07:56:18 From Ilana Lowery-Common Sense Media : What about the Arizona Community Foundation?

07:57:01 From Lea Marquez Peterson : Ilana - The Funding Subcomm made a list of foundations including AZ Comm Found to research resources. Thanks!

07:57:03 From Ilana Lowery-Common Sense Media : And the ACF is one of the funders for Common Sense

07:57:17 From Tracey Beal : We would be happy to help partner on a grant.

07:57:36 From Lea Marquez Peterson : Thanks, Tracey. What organization are you with?

07:57:57 From DerekMasseh : Sun Corridor Network is happy to partner on grants as well

07:57:58 From Tracey Beal : School Connect a 501c3 working with schools and stake holders

07:58:28 From Jeff Sobotka to Derek Masseh(Privately) : Derek,

07:59:03 From Jeff Sobotka to Derek Masseh(Privately) : I responded to Lev's email about partnering and that want to get a call together early this week.

07:59:09 From Ilana Lowery-Common Sense Media : Common Sense could also partner. www.commonsense.org. We also are a nonprofit working with schools and families

07:59:23 From DerekMasseh to Jeff Sobotka(Privately) : Hey Jeff, Lev and I decided Friday afternoon to bring in one or more grant writers from his network in to help

07:59:38 From DerekMasseh to Jeff Sobotka(Privately) : Awesome, want me to help orchestrate that call?

07:59:59 From Lea Marquez Peterson : Thanks, Derek. Would the UA have any resources (students with experience?) to provide grant writing assistance if we identify grants that can help communities throughout AZ?

08:00:50 From Karen Ziegler : I need to drop off for 10 minutes for another call. I'll jump back on when I'm done and provide my update.

08:01:14 From DerekMasseh to Lea Marquez Peterson(Privately) : Lea, SCN will be bringing in a grant writer in the next couple of weeks. We could consider involving students (grad students in particular)

08:01:55 From Lea Marquez Peterson to Derek Masseh(Privately) : That would be great. We spoke at our Funding Subcomm about all of the grants/foundations but that the primarily rural communities who are in greatest need lack grant writing skills.

08:03:07 From Jeff Sobotka : Hi Nicole, We are working with ATNI and NTUA Wireless to provide free wireless data service on the Navajo Nation under a FCC temporary spectrum use permit. I would like to see affordability addressed through these spectrum opportunities and with the 2.5GHz window being the best example available today.

08:04:17 From Steve Hill : HughesNet has offered to help with grant applications related to telehealth. If anyone is interested I can put you in touch with the person heading this up.

08:05:14 From Malavika Muralidharan : The State Library is a member of SHLB and John Windhausen is a great resource for things Legislation

08:05:29 From Janet Major : thanksMala! Nice to"see" you!

08:06:07 From Jeff Sobotka : ECA Info: <https://www.eda.gov/coronavirus/>

08:06:11 From Jeff Sobotka : EDA

08:06:53 From NicoleUmayam : Temporary spectrum use leading to full licenses for the Nation, I hope. Are any other tribes applying for 2.5 licenses over their lands?

08:11:40 From Janet Major : That's a great question for Jeff - can other tribes apply for the exception?

08:15:52 From NicoleUmayam : Here's a tech support hotline example from Rhode Island: <http://highlanderinstitute.org/distance-learning-helpline/>

08:22:05 From NicoleUmayam : Lea, here's another funding opportunity from the State Library: <https://azlibrary.gov/libdev/funding>

08:25:35 From PeterNewbegin : c2cpima.org

08:26:34 From Jeff Sobotka : All tribes can apply however it makes the most sense for the Navajo Nation & Gila River Indian Community that already have an in house telecom group otherwise it would make sense to partner with MuralNet or another provider who is an expert in the application/implementation process.

08:29:33 From Lea Marquez Peterson : Jennifer - Is there an opportunity to expand the Gr Phx Chamber effort statewide? Other chambers in the state? I'm happy to help if needed. Thanks for your work!

08:31:38 From Jennifer Mellor : @Lea Marquez - yes, we have actually asked other chambers throughout Arizona to support similar efforts in their communities. We are happy to share our model. They just need to find a computer repair store to partner to make it successful.

08:31:39 From Janet Major : usdla.org/webinar for a grant update Friday May 15 @10am

08:33:00 From Bob Jacobson : For USDA grants, the grant writer should be part of the applying "consortium."

08:33:08 From Bob Jacobson : Otherwise, not payable.

08:34:20 From nanwilliams : Education and Library Committees will meet on Thursday at 9 let me know if you need the meeting information nanwilli@gmail.com

08:34:33 From nanwilliams : 9:30 sorry not 9