Greater Arizona Educational Leadership

AZBSN Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network

Arizona Telecommunications and Information Council

May 18, 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, Jamie Brown, Kirk Busch, Steve Crooks, Jerry Crow, Mark Dallmeier, Dan Doehler, Terence Ford, Tim Harrington, Ian Hathcock, Steve Hill, Bob Jacobson, Monroe Keedo, John Kelly, Ilana Lowery, Derek Masseth, Sophia Mayberry, Jennifer Mellor, Mala Muralidharan, Mauricio Orozco, Cody Pedersen, Lea Marquez Peterson, Ricardo Platt, Lynda Santoro, Daniel Schwiebert, Jeff Sobotka, Dan Stormont, Cory TerEick, Nicole Umayam, Marisa Walker, Nan Williams, Karen Ziegler

Task Force Meetings and Subcommittees

Steve Peters announced that the task force agreed that there will be no task force meeting on May 25th (Memorial Day) and task force meetings will continue to be held every Monday morning in June at 7:30 am.

Steve stated the Education and Libraries and the Funding & Resources subcommittees have been holding meetings. The Technology subcommittee is expected to start meeting on Tuesday mornings beginning on May 26th, and the Communities subcommittee has been delayed because of an emergency issue of one of the facilitators of that subcommittee. Steve requested people to contact him if they wish to participate in one of the subcommittees.

ED2 Corp. Presentation on 5G

Ricardo Platt, Director of Business Development & Sales at ED2 Corp., gave a presentation titled "5G Compatible High-Speed Private Networks". ED2 is a Tucson-based company that sells 5G equipment. Steve Peters mentioned that ED2 received an award for innovation from the Arizona Technology Council last year.

Ricardo overviewed 5G technology and its benefits in providing extremely high data rates and low latency enabling new applications in such areas as smart agriculture, smart transportation, smart cities, smart infrastructure, telehealth, and education. He described the current state of 5G deployment and issues related to deploying future 5G mmWave technology with many small cells. He discussed the role 5G private networks could play in getting 5G deployed in the near term before broader commercial rollouts, through such means as rural co-ops, private infrastructure investment funds, and independent taxing districts. Ricardo's full presentation will be posted on the "COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force" website.

Jeff Sobotka commented that some Arizona rural communities, such as Page and Yuma, are looking into this private networks model for deploying 5G in the near future.

State Broadband Director Update

Jeff Sobotka, State Broadband Director, provided an update on his current activities. His short-term focus had been on working with ADE on getting hotspots to students and working with the Arizona State Library on the Cisco Wi-Fi extension pilot for libraries. He is now shifting back to focusing on broadband infrastructure.

Jeff is working in several broadband infrastructure areas currently: ADOT on its smart highways program, Navajo Nation broadband infrastructure needs, and with Yuma County. He is looking at models for 5G deployment as well. He plans to visit rural communities again as travel restrictions are lifted.

Jeff is encouraging applications for federal government grant programs. He is discussing with the CIOs of the three state universities applications for federal government funding of broadband infrastructure. Education and telemedicine are big areas for grant funding. There should be a focus on leveraging the E-rate funded broadband infrastructure of schools and libraries. Jeff noted that Janet Major of the Arizona Telemedicine Program is hosting a USDA Grant Funding Webinar on May 20th at 12:00 pm, which will discuss how to prepare a successful USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant application (applications are due July 13, 2020) as well as applying for the USDA Broadband ReConnect grants/loans program for broadband infrastructure in rural communities. Registration for this webinar is at https://telemedicine.arizona.edu/webinar.

Jeff noted the Telehealth Broadband Action Team (discussed at previous task force meetings), led by Nancy Rowe of the Arizona Telemedicine Program, is focused on understanding the telehealth needs of communities/hospitals and meets once a month.

Steve Peters mentioned that $3.3 million in federal government relief funding was allocated to extend Wi-Fi access in Phoenix at more city facilities, and also includes the purchase of 800 tablets with built-in hotspots for families in city public housing with school-age children.

Subcommittees Activities

Education and Libraries Subcommittee

Mala Muralidharan, one of the facilitators of the Education and Libraries Subcommittee, overviewed the subcommittee meeting held on May 14th. The full meeting report is posted on the task force website.

Mala explained a key focus of the subcommittee will be to gather needs of schools and libraries for digital access including broadband Internet access, digital equipment, digital content, technical support, and training. Nan Williams, Executive Director of the Arizona Technology in Education Association, participates in the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) COVID-19 task force connectivity group, which will be conducting a national survey of households on their connectivity needs – the survey questionnaire will be ready in about six weeks. The Pew Research Center has constructed nationwide estimates of deficiencies in Internet access and devices that could be a good source of data for grant writers. Tracy Rexroat of ADE has collected data on free Wi-Fi hotspots in Arizona, which could be added to the Arizona State Library map of Wi-Fi available at libraries and the broader State Land Dept. Wi-Fi map.

Mala noted that Ilana Lowery has shared the "Digital Equity Plan" of Common Sense Media, which calls on Congress to fund devices and broadband service so all students can connect to distance learning.

Technical Support (Help Desk) options for schools and libraries to assist students, parents, and library patrons, were discussed such as Insight's help desk work for clients and the Generation YES (GenYES) organization. Steve Peters explained GenYES provides IT training for students at schools so that they can provide technical support for students and teachers. Steve will invite Dennis Harper, the CEO of GenYES, to give a presentation to the task force, possibly at the June 1st meeting.

Mala also reviewed the Arizona State Library $657,000 in CARES Act Institute of Museum and Library Services funding to expand digital network access, purchase Internet-accessible devices, and provide technical support services to citizens. State libraries will be able to apply for this funding under three categories: CARES Express (express grants to purchase Chromebooks and germ-buster kits), CARES Expand (for hotspots and digital literacy training), and CARES Supplemental (partnering with tribal entities and museums on virtual tours etc.).

Funding & Resources Subcommittee

Lea Marquez Peterson, facilitator of the Funding & Resources Subcommittee, overviewed their subcommittee meeting held on May 15th. The full meeting report is posted on the task force website.

The subcommittee is focused on short-term funding and resources for Wi-Fi access, hotspots, and devices. Long-term federal/state funding sources will be handled by the Arizona Commerce Authority broadband team.

One of the funding goals will be to raise funds for libraries to provide Wi-Fi extension outside the libraries, where the cost of installing such a solution is known from the pilot program with libraries (discussed at previous task force meetings).

The subcommittee has identified a list of foundations and potential corporate sponsors/funders for grant applications. The subcommittee will construct a list of grant writers that could be hired by communities to apply for grants. The subcommittee will work with the task force to identify communities that have needs.

Lea also mentioned that as a Commissioner of the Arizona Corporation Commission she has been appointed to be a member of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) Presidential Broadband Expansion Task Force, which is currently compiling data on best practices that includes the potential of Universal Service Fund (USF) funding to be allocated for broadband.

Other Subcommittees Information

Steve Peters stated the Technology Subcommittee will be led by Tom Mehlert, Executive Director of AZ StRUT, and Steve Hill, President of the Satellite Broadcasting & Communications Association. The Technology Subcommittee will meet on Tuesdays at 9:30 am likely beginning the week of May 26th.

Steve will post information on the subcommittees and their meetings on the task force "Planning" webpage.

Steve also commented that he would like the subcommittees to focus on how to bring subcommittee participants and partners together to solve issues in addition to sharing information.

Next Steps

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, June 1st at 7:30 am, and subsequent overall task force meeting will be held on Monday mornings each week in June.

Terence Ford noted Insight has a 23-year service help-desk model to handle technical support needs (as mentioned in the Education & Libraries Subcommittee section), and will give a presentation to the task force on this in the future.

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

Appendix: Chat from Zoom

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:40 AM)
The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society analyzes the House Democrat's Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act in detail in their 5/15/20 article at https://www.benton.org/blog/broadband-heroes. The Senate doesn't seem initially receptive on this so we'll have to see what Congress may yet come together on and push out as the next stimulus wave.

From Sophia Mayberry to Everyone: (7:40 AM)
  Be right back.

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:42 AM)

[file: /Users/oris/Downloads/CQ Roll Call - The Socerer's Stimulus.png]
  More $$$$ to come (like magic)!

From Sophia Mayberry to Everyone: (7:44 AM)
  back

From Bob Jacobson to Everyone: (7:45 AM)
  US Economic Development Administration (Commerce Dept.) Building Block grants for regional development may also be available for telecom/info infrastructure devoted to that purpose.

From Tim Harrington to Everyone: (7:57 AM)
  Hi Everyone, Need to jump off to another meeting. Good to see all! - GAZeL Board, Online Higher Ed Academic Dean

From Karen Ziegler to Everyone: (7:59 AM)
  Steve - I need to jump on an 8am call but I'll call back in when I'm finsihed

From Sherri Bakker to Everyone: (8:03 AM)

Hi Steve - Sorry my audio is not working but i am hear listening actually here listening

From Sophia Mayberry to Everyone: (8:12 AM)
 Correct jeff

From Mark Dallmeier to Everyone: (8:12 AM)
  Team I have to leave to jump on a call - thank you for the support. I will be reaching out to many of you soon.

From Jeff Sobotka to Everyone: (8:16 AM)
  Ryan Johnson from State Land is the administrator of the free WiFi availability map. Please contact him directly about adding to the State's map rjohnson@azland.gov

From Cory TerEick to Everyone: (8:28 AM)
  I need to jump!   Thanks all!