Arizona Telehealth Broadband Action Team (BAT)
Monthly Meeting – Minutes

Tuesday, May 5, 2020, 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Attendees:

- Patti Beauchamp, Grant Writer, MHA Foundation, Payson
- Jack Beveridge, President, Arizona Rural Health Association, Parker
- Julie Bui, IT Business Development Manager, MD24 House Call, Surprise
- Nicole Bullard, RN, BSN, Telehealth Site Coordinator, Northern Arizona Healthcare, Flagstaff
- Mark Carroll, Chief Medical Officer, Health Choice Arizona, Flagstaff
- Jennifer DonGilli, OR Nurse Executive/Interim Co-CNO, Tsehootsooi Medical Center, Fort Defiance
- Ellen Dudzik, BAT Coordinator, Arizona Telemedicine Program, Tucson
- Holly Figueroa, Tribal Liaison/Cultural Competency, Health Choice Arizona, Flagstaff
- Michael Holcomb, Associate Director, Technology, Arizona Telemedicine Program, Tucson
- Marcus Johnson, Director of State Health Policy & Advocacy, Vitalyst Health Foundation, Phoenix
- Bob Larkin, Healthcare Technology Equipment Coordinator, North Country Healthcare, Flagstaff
- Jonathan Leonard, CEO, Desert Senita Community Health Center, Arizona City / Ajo
- Sanja Long, CEO, MHA Foundation, Payson
- Janet Major, Associate Director, Education & Facilities, Arizona Telemedicine Program, Tucson
- Ivonne Melendez, RN, BSN, Telehealth Site Coordinator, Northern Arizona Healthcare, Flagstaff
- Stephen Neal, PA, Chief of Staff, Family Practice, Informatics, Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility, Chinle
- Anne Nguyen, MD24 House Call, Surprise
- Linh Nguyen, MD, CEO/Founder, MD24 House Call, Surprise
- Mauricio Orozco, Community Connections Engagement Manager, WellCare, a Centene Corporation, Phoenix
- Son Yong Pak, Director, Member Advocacy, Care1st Health Plan Arizona, Inc., Phoenix
- Steve Peters, Coordinator, Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network, Tucson
- Jennifer Pierce, Telemedicine Manager, Health Choice Arizona, Flagstaff
- Pamela Pierce, Hospital Administrator, Sana Behavioral Health Hospital Prescott, Prescott
- Tara Plese, Chief External Affairs Officer, Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers, Phoenix
- Elizabeth Robinson, Southern Arizona Telehealth Alliance Coordinator, SEAHEC, Sierra Vista
- Nancy Rowe, Associate Director, Public Policy & Outreach, Arizona Telemedicine Program, Flagstaff
- Susy Salvo-Wendt, Telemedicine Specialist, Summit Healthcare, Show Low
- Jeff Sobotka, VP and State Broadband Director, Arizona Commerce Authority, Phoenix
- Gigi Sorenson, Independent Consultant, Flagstaff
- Padma Taggarse, Executive Director, Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG), Scottsdale
- Kim Thursby, Computer Support Technician, Spectrum Healthcare, Cottonwood
- Rick Yanke, MIS Manager, Encompass Health Services, Inc., Page / Fredonia / Littlefield
- *Additional phone participants*

Meeting Leaders:

- Jeff Sobotka, VP and State Broadband Director, Arizona Commerce Authority, BAT Leader – JeffS@azcommerce.com, 602-432-0004 (cell)
- Nancy Rowe, Associate Director for Public Policy & Outreach, Arizona Telemedicine Program, BAT Facilitator – nrowe@telemedicine.arizona.edu, 928-266-1164

Meeting Notes:

The meeting was recorded; you can view it at
https://aztelemedicine.zoom.us/rec/share/zM1VKKzy0iRLcKvcsUHje6l9Qo25X6a80Ckf86ALyxoir-x4HPQ87JAmHvAInskt

Updates: Arizona Broadband and the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) (Jeff Sobotka)

- Prior to the PHE, Jeff's focus was on statewide infrastructure. In the past five weeks or so he has absorbed other functions including helping K-12 students connect online for school, getting connectivity established for temporary hospitals (notably St. Luke's), and providing hotspots and public WiFi for students, teachers, parents, people who are applying for state or federal benefits online, etc.
- As we move forward with "re-opening the economy" there is more call for virtual connectivity, for health as well as economic reasons. People are realizing how much can be accomplished in virtual meetings; it has the potential for greater productivity and there is suddenly a lot of federal grant money being allocated for making those connections possible, particularly in the area of education.
- The FCC's E-rate program is now allowing other than K-12 organizations to access the fiber installed under the program.

USDA Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program (Jeff Sobotka)

- Jeff said the USDA DLT program is complicated and not easy to follow intuitively—it requires attending a couple of training meetings to get a good understanding of it. He showed his slides from the grant webinar April 24 (webinar recording here).
- Jeff said it's important to bring this money into the state and this is the best opportunity we have. In the last funding cycle, every single qualifying program under the Telemedicine Program was funded—they do want to give this money away. The main program purpose is to enable distance learning and telemedicine services in rural areas.
- Grant sizes have changed; opioid treatment programs are given high score for funding, as well as working in an "opportunity zone." Check the map of Opportunity Zones on the Arizona Commerce Authority website: https://azcommerce.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=be88b47979a5443aac8efede74266b91
- Organizations that can apply include corporations, tribes, and state and local governments. Purchases can include equipment for telemedicine and distance learning with a focus on hardware, software, audio/video networks, data terminals, and telecommunications terminal equipment. Some ineligible items include land and buildings. The grant is focused on telemedicine, not normal hospital operations.
- As is typical with most federal grant programs, a cash match is required—this one is 15% and you can't use funds from federal programs as the match. Points are awarded for rurality, economic need, and special considerations such as opioid or substance abuse disorder treatment. Community involvement also rates big; letters from people in the community or elected officials that explain the clear benefit of services to the community are key.
- Completing these applications is not easy, so please attend the USDLA Webinar on May 20 at 12 noon: https://telemedicine.arizona.edu/event/webinar/2020-05-20-jeff-sobotka-brian-smith-and-dana-satterwhite-how-prepare-successful-usda to register.
- Application deadline is July 13, 2020 by 11:59 EDT – Apply online; no paper applications.
- Brian Smith is a great source of information if you have questions. He is the Arizona state rep. for USDA. Reach out to Brian smith1@usda.gov, Jeff JeffS@azcommerce.com or Janet Major jmajor@telemedicine.arizona.edu with questions.

Updates: Broadband News – Mike Holcomb, Associate Director, Information Technology, Arizona Telemedicine Program (ATP)

- Mike just published a blog on the ATP website on the FCC CARES Act Telehealth grants: https://telemedicine.arizona.edu/blog/update-fcc-s-new-covid-19-telehealth-program
  - o The CARES Act provided $200 million for distribution by the FCC. The FCC's COVID-19 telehealth program has funded projects totaling close to $14 million so far, ranging from $26,000 to $1 million, and averaging $456,000 each.
  - o If you have applied for less than the $1 million cap per project and exhaust your funding, you may apply for more. Fifteen states have received funding so far. In addition to general broadband services, the program has funded telehealth platform services and equipment such as blood pressure cuffs; equipment must be "connected devices" to qualify for funding.
  - o Awards can be retroactive for expenses back to March 13.
- Mike said that on April 23 the FCC announced a $9 billion program to fund 5G networks into rural America. One condition for approval was that T-Mobile, for example, would provide 5G to 90% of rural America.
  - o This may take several years to roll out.
  - o This includes $680 million for tribal lands as part of Phase I.
  - o The FCC is already receiving complaints about how they determine areas for auction for the wireless service, whether mapping or census data.
- Separately, the FCC also announced opening an additional 1200 MHz of 6G WiFi service to be made available later this year. This will improve the ability to provide service in rural areas.

Jeff reiterated that these projects will take some time to roll out, but they are important developments, particularly with regard to the spectrum.

- As an example, one of Arizona's telehealth challenges is on the Navajo Nation and at the Ft. Defiance Indian Hospital, where they are out of available spectrum. The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) and another carrier have applied for the FCC additional emergency spectrum, which was granted. They will have this access for 90-120 days and will open it for other folks to use. Devices are being provided for K-12 kids to use in addition to working on the telemedicine issues. The emergency access to the spectrum opened wireless access to people. Carriers taking advantage of this access will make wireless more accessible in these areas.
- There is no wait for fiber to be installed; when spectrum is opened up it is available for use immediately.
- Question from Steve Neal: Clarification: You are saying that NTUA is opening spectrum so people have better access? Jeff said yes and no, that Verizon uses a 700 MHz spectrum because it travels farther and goes through buildings better. NTUA petitioned the FCC for access to T Mobile or ATT spectrum not being used currently—50+ cell phone towers on the Navajo Nation—to be able to use this temporarily throughout the pandemic. Jeff said it's a matter of flipping switches to provide access to that spectrum. In many cases, they don't have devices that fit that spectrum so we're tying to solicit donations of devices that can be distributed to doctors.

- Question from Jennifer Pierce for Mike: Do you know of any organizations that are helping people write grants either for the FCC or the USDA Program? Mike said no but the ATP is open to partnering and working on grants with organizations. He said no one has approached the ATP about the COVID19 telehealth program and that the application process is a bit shorter than the traditional USF application. Janet said a professional grant writer will be presenting at the webinar on May 20: Dana Satterwhite dana.satterwhite@learndesignapply.com

Discussion: Broadband Issues BAT Members Have Identified

Nancy showed the spreadsheet of identified telehealth broadband issues in Arizona. Jeff said he has read through the list and is aware of the issues, but he is opting to set them aside for the moment in order to stay

focused on the public health emergency. It is possible that some of these issues may be addressed in conjunction with the actions being taken to address the pandemic.

Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network's COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force – Steve Peters, AZBSN Coordinator and Janet Major, Associate Director, Education & Facilities, Arizona Telemedicine Program
Steve said about a year ago the Arizona Telecommunications and Information Council (ATIC) and the Greater Arizona Educational Leadership organization, along with other organizations and individuals in education and telemedicine, created the [Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network](#) (AZBSN).

- The intent was to bring together people interested in broadband issues, working on innovative projects, or with a need to do projects, and create an opportunity for those people to share information and connect with each other.
- AZBSN started with some webinars and a round table. Then with the COVID19 situation, it recognized that it needed to address some more immediate needs, so it created what the Digital Access/Digital Inclusion Task Force to address broadband connectivity, and the need for technology devices, content resources, and technology skills, particularly in the education space.
- Task force representation includes state and local government officials, public policy makers, rural community leaders, economic development reps, educational institutions and libraries, health services, public safety, telecom, tech and consulting companies.
- The task force has been meeting weekly for about four or five weeks.
- Task force goal is to facilitate collaboration, coordination, information sharing and communication; collaborate on priority initiatives for schools, libraries, telemedicine, etc; develop a statewide COVID19 digital access strategy to support education and healthcare facilities as well as businesses and the community at large; and identify and advocate for funding and resources to enable COVID19 Digital Access Projects.
- The task force has three teams: Library/Education; Funding; and Technology. Each team will report on what it perceives as the major digital access issues what strategies can be recommended, and what funding is needed.
    - The Funding Team discussed that while there is a lot of funding coming from government, there are other sources of funding such as foundations and donation campaigns as well as volunteer support to provide refurbished equipment, etc.
    - The team discussed the Community Reinvestment Act, which requires banks to invest in the communities they serve. The AZBSN wants to work with banks to let them know the broadband needs that exist and initiatives that are underway that banks could support. They also want to work with communities and schools and help them learn how to access this funding.
    - The Technologies Team is working to determine what technologies are available and should be considered to improve internet access to schools, libraries, and communities, and what kinds of devices are needed.
    - Initially, the AZBSN intended to form a Telemedicine Team, but thought it would be better to collaborate with the Arizona Telehealth BAT than to have each group doing its own thing.
- Janet said Steve has convened an "A-Team" and many of the folks who are on the BAT and the AZBSN are people that the ATP has been networking with in telecom for many years. She discussed the history and challenges of getting connections to rural areas and obtaining USDA grants in the past 25 years and mentioned current areas of need such as the Navajo Nation and Nogales and Patagonia.
- Steve said he contacted a company called MSS Consultant in Arizona, which has offered a consultant to work with the task force and help to facilitate planning. He said they are moving to using Microsoft Teams so all the teams will be able to use that for communication and data sharing. Steve invited the BAT members to join the task force, which meets Mondays at 7:30am. Contact info to join is: 520-321-1309; aticairzona@gmail.com; stevepeters@tucsonlink.org; www.arizonatele.org

Q&A:

Jennifer Pierce asked why we don't combine the Telehealth BAT and a Telemedicine Team of the AZBHN task force. Answer from Jeff: The stakeholder's meeting is very broad. The thinking was that the BAT would focus on specific broadband issues. As we get past the initial rush of stuff that is going on currently, we are going to get back to the specific telemedicine issues represented on the spreadsheet that was introduced earlier. But I do encourage people to go to both. Answer from Steve: We don't want to compete with what you are doing, but all of you are welcome to join. Some of the issues we are addressing may be of mutual interest, but not specific to telehealth.

Question from Nancy Rowe: Does the broadband stakeholder group fund projects? Answer from Steve: No. We talked about whether we would apply for and provide grants, but decided against creating an additional level of access for people to have to go through to receive funding and potentially delay the process.

Discussion:

Nancy said Holly Figueroa has a specific need for 16 cell phones for the Gila River Tribe for healthcare needs during the pandemic.

- Nancy said it may not be big enough to write a grant for and asked Mike if that could be something that could be funded with an ATP innovation award. Mike said he would encourage Holly to complete an application, and that it's fairly simple: https://telemedicine.arizona.edu/content/innovation-awards-program.
- Jeff asked Holly if this request is one she had sent him previously and she said yes, in addition to Hopi Tribe needs for WiFi hotspots, laptops and phones. Jeff said he had forwarded her request to the person who is running the Arizona Together website.
- Steve said some telecom providers have expanded access, data, offerings, etc., for no charge. He suggested asking local businesses for donations for some of the smaller scale needs.
- Beth Robinson suggested reaching out to the local AHEC (Area Health Education Center), too. She said at SEAHEC they donate things like wheelchairs. She offered to assist in connecting Holly.

Mike provided a link to a video tutorial for filling out the FCC COVID19 Telehealth Program funding request: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPFvt-ocC24

The meeting was adjourned until the first Tuesday of June.