

November 2, 2020 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Andrew Bevington, Collin Boyce, Kirk Busch, Michael Cohen, Josh Cohn, Jerry Crow, Steve Daurio, Will Davin, Alexandra Dominguez, Terence Ford, Holly Henley, Steve Hill, Shereka Jackson, John Kelly, Tarma Liranzo, Sophia Mayberry, Mala Muralidharan, Peter Newbegin, Mauricio Orozco, Cody Pedersen, Lawrie Prickett, Tracy Rexroat, Michelle Simon, Jeff Sobotka, Karen Ziegler

Task Force Recommendations Report, Task Force Report Next Steps, Report Distribution & Marketing Committee, Task Force Participants

Task Force Recommendations Report

Steve Peters stated the task force recommendations report was put in final publication format by Linda Danaher of Insight and the finalized report has been posted on the AZBSN website. Terence Ford of Insight explained that visual aids/graphics help draw attention to key points in the report. Steve noted that the report is 52 pages and is dated November 2, 2020.

Steve and Mark Goldstein thanked Insight for their work in putting the report in an excellent final presentation form.

Task Force Next Steps

Steve reviewed the next steps for the task force as described in the report:

1. Create a marketing team to develop/manage a marketing strategy to distribute the report.
2. Develop an AZBSN implementation plan for the task force recommendations that can be undertaken by this task force, including establishing committees to work on specific initiatives.
3. Schedule meetings with policy makers to advocate for implementation of the task force recommendations.
4. Identify and engage potential partners.
5. Update/Expand the task force website.
6. Issue AZBSN and COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force periodic newsletters.
7. Present informational webinars and networking events for stakeholders.
8. Seek sponsors/grants to fund AZBSN and task force initiatives.
9. Support the state government and other responsible organizations in developing plans and strategies to implement the task force recommendations.

Task Force Report Distribution and Marketing Committee

Steve stated he will be working today with Mark Goldstein and Karen Ziegler on preparing a cover letter for distributing the task force report. Mark noted they will also be working with Insight on issuing a PR Newswire press release for the report. The report will start to be distributed after the November 3rd election, and Steve will e-mail the task force when this is ready to proceed. Steve has also begun putting descriptive information about the report on the AZBSN website.

Steve noted that task force participants who wish to be on the task force's marketing committee, which will work on the distribution of the task force recommendations report and overall marketing of the task force, to contact him. Terence offered an Insight marketing analyst to join this marketing committee.

Mauricio Orozco suggested the website include a place for people to sign up to receive the newsletters, and Steve responded that this will be done.

Task Force Participants Survey

Steve has sent out a link in today's meeting announcement to a Google Form for task force participants to fill out their organization, job title, and contact information so this is up-to-date for all participants. Steve asked all task force participants to fill this out as soon as possible.

Updates: State Broadband Director, AZ State Library, ADE

State Broadband Director Update

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

Jeff began by congratulating the task force for producing an in-depth and very effective recommendations report.

Jeff has had a lot of conversations with federal government officials on potential upcoming broadband grant programs. For example, Senators Cornyn (Texas) and Manchin (West Virginia) have proposed a \$10 billion program for broadband. Jeff noted that the task force report along with an Idaho plan will be valuable in developing a state action plan when federal funds are allocated to Arizona. Steve Peters commented that the task force report will be distributed to the Governor's Office.

Jeff will be partnering with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to put together a series of webinars/town halls beginning early next year.

Arizona State Library Update

Mala Muralidharan, E-rate Administrator for Public Libraries at the Arizona State Library, reported on her recent activities.

Arizona has received about \$54 million in E-rate funding to date in 2020. There will be a state-level training day in December and January to answer specific questions E-rate applicants have.

The Arizona State Library is partnering with the Arizona Dept. of Education (ADE) to provide Internet access in rural underserved/unserved communities using bookmobiles. The bookmobiles are equipped with Insight fully-managed portable AirLink 4G LTE antennas, and ADE Kajeet hotspots with CIPA-compliant filtering are used for access. This pilot project for ten bookmobiles is funded by the Library Services & Technology Act (LSTA) through the Arizona State Library and by ADE, and will run through June 2021 with subsequent funding coming from the E-rate program. This bookmobile program is intended to meet the immediate needs for Internet access in rural districts with high percentages of low-income students or where Internet access is unavailable or unaffordable. The intention for the long-term is to build fiber solutions for these communities.

In 2017, the FCC declared it would support E-rate fiber projects for broadband access to schools and libraries with additional funding up to 10% if the State provided matching funds. The State of Arizona through the Arizona Corporation Commission and Governor's Office allocated \$11 million in state matching funds. This E-rate program has funded over \$100 million worth of fiber broadband projects to date in Arizona (school districts and libraries that had the 10% state matching did not have to pay anything for their fiber buildouts). There still remains about \$2.7 million in unspent state matching funds from this "Arizona Broadband for Education Initiative", and this can be used for the E-rate application funding year July 2021-June 2022. The needs assessment, partnerships, call for RFPs, the mandatory 28-day wait before evaluation, and the evaluation and selection of a service provider can all be done now. The application window will likely open in January 2021 and close at the end of March or early April 2021. USAC, which administers E-rate funding, will review the applications – fiber projects are subject to a high level of scrutiny and approval may take 3-4 months. Smaller fiber projects from the current POP to the library or school are encouraged. If more fiber than needed is deployed, it must be cost-allocated. Funding only supports the needs of schools and libraries, but build out can be "to and through" these anchor institutions as long as it is properly cost-allocated. Milan Eaton of ADE and Mala will be available to help with E-rate applications if needed.

Mala also noted that there is a new report published by Common Sense Media and Education SuperHighway that provides some practical solutions to address the homework gap and digital divide for students. The report describes three steps stakeholders are using to close the digital divide during the COVID-19 crisis: conducting a high-quality needs assessment, developing a procurement strategy for connectivity and devices, and finding sustainable funding from governments and other sources. See the Appendix Chat for a link to this report. Ilana Lowery of Common Sense Media may discuss this report at an upcoming task force meeting.

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 has reconvened their task force established in May-June for reopening schools to determine the needs schools have at the present time.

The ADE Technology Task Force is continuing their subcommittees' work (discussed at previous meetings of our task force). Current projects include developing a digital resources toolkit for teachers as well as work on a white paper on the digital divide in Arizona considering key findings from other studies.

Future Stars Presentation

Shereka Jackson, founder and CEO of Future Stars, Inc., delivered a presentation on the organization to the task force. Following are key points from the presentation, and the full presentation will be posted on the task force website.

Shereka founded Future Stars as a non-profit organization in 2008. Its mission is to help inner-city youth achieve their goals in higher education with a focus on sports and technology, emphasizing career readiness and STEM education. They established a hands-on STEM program where students received a laptop, Chromebook, or Kindle Fire.

With the COVID-19 crisis, Future Stars has partnered with the “Million Dollar Teacher Project” to address the digital divide for Title 1 schools. So far 32 schools have applied for this project, requesting 11,000 devices and Internet access for 8000 students. Future Stars does community drives or receives donations from organizations to meet these needs, and AZ StRUT refurbishes devices donated. So far, they have distributed 326 devices. Their greatest needs are for funding and partner organizations to provide devices.

Jeff Sobotka commented he would like to discuss with Shereka the types of devices they need and how ACA could help. Kirk Busch offered assistance in getting Chromebooks to students.

Steve Peters noted there are several organizations involved with our task force that have similar objectives, and the task force should consider how to enable these organizations to work together in the future.

Next Steps

As noted above, the task force recommendations report will begin to be distributed this week, and people interested in joining the task force marketing committee should contact Steve Peters.

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, November 9th at 7:30 am.

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

Appendix: Chat from Zoom

From Steve Peters to Everyone: (7:28 AM)

Link to AZBSN Task Force Report Web Page and download report
<https://www.arizonatele.org/taskforce-report-2020.html>

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:48 AM)

Report landing page at <https://www.arizonatele.org/taskforce-report-2020.html> Yeah! November 2 release is accomplished. Report looks great. Thanks all for participation and support!

From collin to Everyone: (7:52 AM)

good morning everyone. I am not sure if there is time on the next meeting. if there is I would like to provide an update on the Tucson project to the team.

From Malavika Muralidharan - to Everyone: (8:13 AM)

I don't see Ilana from Common Sense Media..Here's a new report from Common Sense Media and Education SuperHighway that provides some practical solutions to address the Homework Gap and the Digital Divide for students. <https://www.common sense media.org/connect-all-students>

From Malavika Muralidharan - to Everyone: (8:15 AM)

The paper details three key steps stakeholders have used to close the divide during this period:

- Conduct a high quality needs assessment
- Develop a procurement strategy for connectivity and devices
- Find sustainable funding from governments and other sources

From Jeff Sobotka to Everyone: (8:24 AM)

JeffS@azcommerce.com

From Steve Hill to Everyone: (8:24 AM)

Good work all i have to jump to a leg meeting. See you next week

From Josh Cohn to Everyone: (8:26 AM)

Shereka, great mission. Have you worked with any larger organizations on larger grants yet?

From Shereka Jackson to Everyone: (8:27 AM)

hello Josh, that is something we are wanting to do.