

November 9, 2020 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Robert Alvarado, Susan Bittersmith, Collin Boyce, Melissa Boydston, Kirk Busch, Michael Cohen, Jerry Crow, Alexandra Dominguez, Terence Ford, Bruce Hart, Ian Hathcock, Holly Henley, John Kelly, Tarma Liranzo, Brian Louderback, Ilana Lowery, Derek Masseth, Sophia Mayberry, Clarence McAllister, Jeff Mirasola, Mala Muralidharan, Mauricio Orozco, Cody Pedersen, Lawrie Prickett, Tracy Rexroat, Michelle Simon, Jeff Sobotka, Karen Ziegler

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 landing page for the report on the AZBSN website. Steve and Terence Ford noted that the landing page provides a high-level context for the report and the Task Force “About” page also discusses the report. Steve and Mark Goldstein thanked Insight for their work in putting the report in an excellent final publication form adding excellent graphics throughout the report.

Steve is finalizing an e-mail that task force participants can use to send the report to their contacts. This e-mail will include a link to the landing page where recipients can download the report. Mark posted this link to the landing page in the Appendix Chat.

Mark asked Terence about when the PR Newswire press release for the report will be issued, and Terence responded that they are targeting that for later this week and Kathy Cramer of Insight will work with Steve on this. Steve added that Mark and Terence should look at his e-mail mentioned above for use in writing the press release.

Steve will be distributing the task force report to about 200-300 contacts in the ATIC/GAZEL database. Terence remarked that it will be critical to follow up with the “Next Steps” described in the report after the report has been distributed.

Updates: State Broadband Director. AZ State Library, ADE, ACC, Sun Corridor Network

State Broadband Director Update

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

Jeff has been working on making the 2018 State Broadband Strategic Plan more actionable in the current COVID-19 crisis, working with the federal government and seeking input from service providers. There is a lot of activity at the federal level on broadband funding, and Arizona intends to be ready when federal funding programs are passed.

Jeff is partnering with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to put together a series of broadband workshops (webinars/town halls) that will begin about March 3, 2021. The FCC and Economic Development Administration (EDA) will be involved with these workshops, and there will be a workshop devoted to broadband for the tribes. NTIA has conducted such workshops in Idaho and Louisiana, and had a great response. The Arizona workshops will invite a wide audience of interested parties/stakeholders.

Arizona State Library Update

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

The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB) is continuing to pursue its proposal to Congress of the “To and Through” approach where schools and libraries are allowed to extend their networks to serve nearby homes without fear of losing E-rate funding. SHLB is pursuing this because much of student learning is happening at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This proposal is described in the SHLB report titled “We Need Broadband for America Now” (see link to the report in the Appendix Chat).

SHLB’s report highlights The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society report “Broadband for America’s Future: A Vision for the 2020s”, which was published in October 2019 before the COVID-19 crisis (www.benton.org/publications/broadband-america-now). This Benton report outlined the key building blocks of broadband policy: deployment, competition, community anchor institutions, and digital equity (including affordability and adoption). With regard to Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs), the report made the following recommendations:

1. Ensure that everyone can access anchor institution broadband: Congress should adopt broadband credits and deployment funding, promote competitive rates for anchors, and guarantee CAIs’ access to spectrum.
2. Ensure that CAIs have the necessary bandwidth to meet increased demand at competitive prices: Policymakers must establish connectivity goals to accommodate this ever-rising demand, support CAIs with direct funding, and fully fund the Rural Health Care program to sustain the telehealth boom.
3. Use CAIs as a launching pad for community-based broadband access and competition: To build broadband “to and through” CAIs, the FCC must allow E-rate participants to share their networks with the community.

Mala is continuing to assist E-rate applicants, and the Arizona State Library continues to monitor the implementation of the CARES Act funding that the State Library distributed as discussed at previous task force meetings.

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). The overall Technology Task Force meets once a month.

.ACC Update

In the absence of Lea Marquez Peterson, Mark Goldstein reported that Lea was re-elected to serve as a Commissioner of the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC). Mark stated that Lea delivered a presentation on November 5th to the ACC regarding the proposal of modifying the Arizona Universal Service Fund to support broadband in rural high-cost areas (as discussed at previous task force meetings). This will lead to the opening of an ACC docket in the near future to consider this issue. Steve Peters added that Lea is interested in obtaining feedback from our task force as this proceeds.

Sun Corridor Network Update

Derek Masseth, Executive Director of the Sun Corridor Network (SCN), reported that the SCN is currently involved with the US Ignite Overcome Project whose goal is to choose five cities that would each receive a \$300,000 grant for novel approaches to overcoming the digital divide. The SCN is working with the Roosevelt School District in Phoenix on this project.

City of Tucson Municipal Wireless Project Presentation

Collin Boyce, Chief Information Officer of the City of Tucson, delivered a presentation to the task force on their municipal wireless project. Following is a summary of some key points from the presentation. The full presentation will be posted on the task force website.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the City of Tucson, which is one of the cities in the country with the highest poverty rate, determined that Tucson would be hit hard by COVID and that connectivity was a serious issue for the city. They established Project Aeolus to provide wireless connectivity to underserved students as well as utilize the wireless network to drive smart city initiatives. The municipal wireless network was funded by the federal CARES Act.

They created a map showing households without Internet access. Their goal was not to compete with local service providers but rather provide Internet access to students and households (e.g. for telework) that require it. They have designed a municipal network that will reach 191,000 households and can cover 57% of the city with LTE or Wi-Fi access. There are about 100,000 students in Tucson public school districts. This network will start to be deployed this month.

Each household receives a wireless device that is similar to a mobile hotspot with LTE CBRS wireless service or sometimes Wi-Fi access. The network provides filtering so that students only use it for educational purposes. Their project is implemented in partnership with various companies including Insight, JMA Wireless, and Zayo.

Mala Muralidharan asked about the number of devices that can be supported on their wireless network and the distance limitations. Collin responded that they can support up to 40,000 devices per sub-network, and the optimal distance is about 1.25 miles to the cell tower. Collin added that from his house, the Internet access speed ranges from 30 Mbps to 50 Mbps.

Mauricio Orozco asked if their municipal wireless network provides access to housing projects and people with disabilities. Collin responded that the network currently covers some housing projects and they are working on these issues.

Steve Peters asked if libraries can access this network, and Collin responded that some libraries are included now and they will look at adding more libraries and other institutions next year.

Steve also asked how students are qualified to use this network, and Collin responded that they are qualifying students based on CARES Act funding requirements. Collin added there are states that do not allow municipal broadband networks, and one large ISP is protesting the City of Tucson project.

Kirk Busch asked if the City of Tucson project is tied in with the Arizona Commerce Authority Smart Cities Initiative run by Dominic Papa. Collin responded that Tucson is not tied into this. Mark Goldstein added that the Greater Phoenix Smart Region Consortium, called The Connective, includes 24 municipalities, and may expand to other areas in Arizona beyond the greater Phoenix region. Kirk and Mark offered to help broker Tucson involvement in these smart cities activities.

Derek Masseth noted that the Sun Corridor Network is working on deploying LTE CBRS in some communities, and offered to discuss their work with Collin. Other task force participants interested in discussing the Tucson municipal wireless project with Collin listed their names in the Appendix Chat.

Collin concluded saying that the technology works well and is easy to deploy, but the biggest challenge is incumbent service providers attempting to stop this municipal broadband project from proceeding.

Next Steps

As noted above, the task force recommendations report will 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 16th 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 Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:41 AM)

Colorado Governor Polis Released Broadband Executive Order & Initiatives Report 10/30/20. Press Release at <https://www.colorado.gov/governor/news/3336-governor-polis-releases-broadband-initiatives-report> has download links to Colorado Executive Order on Broadband Responsibilities of the Office of Information Technology and Governor's Broadband Initiatives Report PDFs.

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:45 AM)

[file: ACC AUSF Presentation LMP 11_05_20.pdf]

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:46 AM)

Arizona Corporation Commissioner Lea Márquez Peterson presented this deck to ACC on the Arizona Universal Service Fund evolution to cover broadband on 11/5/20 & anticipates the opening of a related docket. ATIC should consider its endorsement of same at next week's Board meeting 11/18.

From Malavika Muralidharan - to Everyone: (7:48 AM)

SHLB report:

<https://www.shlb.org/news/shlb/2020/11/We-Need-Broadband-for-America-Now/>

From Jeff Sobotka to Everyone: (7:49 AM)

No update on Telemedicine. Our monthly meeting was cancelled last Tuesday due to the election.

From Kirk Busch to Everyone: (7:49 AM)

CONGRATS Lea!

From Malavika Muralidharan - to Everyone: (7:50 AM)

SHLB Remote Learning proposal: <https://www.shlb.org/policy/remote-learning>

From Kirk Busch to Everyone: (7:51 AM)

[file: Screenshot 2020-11-09 075035.png]

From Ilana Lowery to Everyone: (7:53 AM)

[file: csm-bcg-esh_report_final_0.pdf]

From Ilana Lowery to Everyone: (7:53 AM)

Mala mentioned this report last week in my absence. I wanted to make sure everyone had this report.

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:55 AM)

AZBSN Report landing page is <https://www.arizonatele.org/taskforce-report-2020.html> FYI.

From Malavika Muralidharan - to Everyone: (8:06 AM)

Sorry ... I should have said Benton Report that SHLB is highlighting in their proposal is here <https://www.shlb.org/news/shlb/2020/11/We-Need-Broadband-for-America-Now/>

From Michelle Simon to Everyone: (8:19 AM)

Colin-I am definitely interested in having a conversation. Let me know when you are at that point in your implementation. Michelle Simon, michelle.simon@pima.gov or 594-5654.

From Malavika Muralidharan - to Everyone: (8:21 AM)

Colin - I would love to discuss with you too mala@azlibrary.gov . Happy to join to call with

Michelle Simon if Michelle and you are ok with it. 480-221-5120

From Robert Alvarado to Everyone: (8:25 AM)

Robert Alvarado - robert.alvarado@cplc.org 602-677-0663

From Collin Boyce to Everyone: (8:25 AM)

Collin Boyce collin.boyce@tucsonaz.gov. 520.400.2256

From Clarence McAllister to Everyone: (8:26 AM)

Collin, I am interested in learning more: Clarence McAllister cmcallister@fortisengineers.us
480-221-9002

From Collin Boyce to Everyone: (8:27 AM)

Bruce Hart 703.856.7865 *Hart. Internal Project manager