

## October 19, 2020, AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

### Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Robert Alvarado, Tracey Beal, Andrew Bevington, Melissa Boydston, Michael Cohen, Jerry Crow, Will Davin, Alexandra Dominguez, Terence Ford, Ian Hathcock, Holly Henley, Steve Hill, Shereka Jackson, John Kelly, Ryan Kelly, Ilana Lowery, Derek Masseth, Sophia Mayberry, Mala Muralidharan, Mauricio Orozco, Tracy Rexroat, Jeff Sobotka, Graham Taylor, Nicole Umayam, Karen Ziegler

### Updates: ADE, AZ State Library, State Broadband Director, Center for the Future of Arizona Webinar

#### Arizona Dept. of Education 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 is working with T-Mobile on their Project 10 Million to determine the needs of schools for hotspots with wireless data plans as well as computers.

They are continuing to update their spreadsheets (discussed at the last task force meeting) that show for school districts and charter schools in each county what mode of instruction they are using: in-person learning, distance learning, or hybrid in-person/distance learning.

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

As reported at our last task force meeting, the ADE Technology Task Force's subcommittees are continuing their meetings.

#### 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) will be holding a webinar on October 30th on "Successful Strategies for Obtaining E-rate Category 2 Support" for school/library internal connectivity. As schools/libraries have obtained Category 1 support for fiber deployments to their sites, they require upgraded internal networks within the sites to take advantage of the higher Internet access bandwidth. Trends show that over 75% of

schools/libraries need more Category 2 funding. There are new guidelines for applying for Category 2 support for the 2021-22 fiscal year. Mala put a link in the Appendix Chat to register for this webinar.

Funds for Learning has published their 2020 E-rate Trends Report based on a survey they conducted in June. This report addresses the following areas: schools' increased bandwidth needs due to the COVID-19 crisis resulting in the FCC opening up a 2nd window for E-rate applications that closed October 16th; there is a need for off-campus Internet access through the anchor institutions; discounted Internet access from homes is needed as students work from home; Wi-Fi access to school buses parked in neighborhoods could be considered for E-rate eligibility (bookmobiles are already eligible); E-rate funding for cybersecurity is needed; 95% of respondents stated E-rate funding was critical for providing Internet access for schools/libraries; and respondents are much more satisfied with administration of the E-rate program though applications are still drawn out. See a link in the Appendix Chat to this report.

SHLB met with the FCC on October 1st to discuss broadband mapping (as discussed at a previous task force meeting). SHLB is addressing this issue because the FCC's current broadband maps leave a lot to be desired and approvals/denials for new fiber or expansions of existing fiber are based on these maps. The FCC is now seeking additional funding from Congress to improve its mapping, but before Congress appropriates these funds the FCC must address the critical weaknesses in the existing maps. Deficiencies in the federal broadband mapping were discussed such as: information is only provided for residences/businesses but not for community anchor institutions (e.g. schools, libraries, healthcare providers); specifies if only one household in a census block has broadband then the whole census block is served, the speeds reported are not accurate or adequate and pricing information is not provided, and the definition of "broadband" is rapidly changing. Karen Ziegler commented that the service providers do list download/upload speeds for the FCC broadband map, and Mala responded if service providers provide such data it is often incomplete information. Karen added that the FCC states the data is up-to-date as of June 2019, but if the data is not correct it is not useful for broadband grant applications. Mark Goldstein remarked that if only one household in a census block has 10/1 Mbps access, a grant application to the federal government could apply for a waiver. Steve Hill remarked that the service provider data inputs are typically about 18 months old. Mala noted that Senator Markey is proposing that ~~that~~ the FCC include anchor institutions in their broadband map as well as do current speed tests.

Nicole Umayam, Digital Inclusion Library Consultant at the Arizona State Library, noted they also look at subscription data from the US Census American Community Survey. The Arizona State Library has new mini-grant opportunities available for Wi-Fi, network boosters, and subscriptions to Wi-Fi analytic services.

#### State Broadband Director Update

Jeff Sobotka, State Broadband Director at the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA), reported on his recent activities. An important project he is focused on now is the state Rural Broadband Development Grant to the city of St. Johns for broadband planning which they will be using to apply for a federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant (see the Oct. 5 task force meeting report for further discussion of this).

#### Center for the Future of Arizona Webinar

Steve Peters reported The Center for the Future of Arizona in conjunction with the League of Arizona Cities and Towns is hosting a webinar on Thursday October 22nd titled "Creating a

Stronger and Brighter Future Together” (Steve sent an e-mail on October 9th to the task force on how to register for this webinar). Steve noted they have a “Progress Meters” project, directed by Ian Dowdy, that is monitoring state indicators of progress in areas such as education and broadband. They are currently using data from the FCC on broadband in Arizona, but will be looking at improvements on this including which areas/institutions have Internet access and whether it is sufficient. Ian has looked at the draft task force recommendations report and plans to join our task force.

## **T-Mobile Project 10 Million**

Steve Peters asked Will Davin, T-Mobile Government Account Manager, to answer further questions from the task force on the T-Mobile Project 10 Million that was presented at the September 28th task force meeting and discussed at subsequent meetings. As discussed above, ADE is working with T-Mobile on the implementation of this project with Arizona school districts.

Will explained that when T-Mobile works with school districts they get orders for large numbers (e.g. thousands) of wireless hotspots, and they work with staging companies to provision/test them and ship them to school districts at no charge along with computers that may also be ordered. The school districts distribute these to families, and there is an 800 phone number families can call for tech support. Will noted they only provide hotspots to school districts in areas where they have wireless Internet coverage. They have lists from ADE of all the public schools and charter schools in Arizona, and of the 2400 school sites only about 180 schools (mostly in the Four Corners and Apache-Navajo regions) do not have T-Mobile wireless Internet coverage. Project 10 Million offers hotspots with unlimited data plans for \$15 per month for schools and \$29.75 per month for government organizations.

Tracey Beal asked if a private donor wishes to purchase a large number of hotspots with data plans or computers for a school can this be done. Will responded that this can be done if the donor makes the donation to the school district, and the school district then works with T-Mobile on this. Mauricio Orozco asked if non-profit organizations qualify for government pricing programs, and Will responded that the programs for them would be similar but a little more expensive. Robert Alvarado commented that Chicanos Por La Causa partners with a lot of schools, and Will responded that if they are working with a school district or charter school (not a for-profit school) this would qualify for the program. Steve Peters asked if universities/community colleges qualify for the program, and Will responded that they do.

Mala Muralidharan asked if there is a limit on how many hotspots can be supplied per state. Will responded that Project 10 Million has allocated Arizona 42,000 hotspots but can also get additional T-Mobile hotspots from their older EmpowerED program. Will added they have plenty of hotspots in stock because they have pre-ordered many hotspots from three manufacturers to enable 10 million hotspots to be delivered nationally.

Henry Goldberg asked about the typical speeds of Internet access for these hotspot data plans. Will responded that the speed depends on proximity to cell towers and whether you are inside or outside. Speeds typically range from 10 Mbps to 150 Mbps with the current 4G hotspots. With emerging 5G services, speeds over 500 Mbps will become available.

Will stated he would send Steve Peters the full T-Mobile Project 10 Million presentation to distribute to the task force. He remarked that there have been lots of articles published on T-Mobile’s Project 10 Million, but for more specific details task force representatives should

contact him. Steve noted that Will's contact information was provided in the invitation he sent out for this task force meeting. Will stated T-Mobile is doing a lot of work to contact organizations about Project 10 Million either through personal sales contacts or media advertising, and they are getting a lot of responses. Terence Ford remarked that Insight would like to discuss with T-Mobile how they may assist with this program for school districts in such areas as tech support or supplying computers.

## **Task Force Recommendations Report**

Steve Peters stated the task force recommendations report is almost finalized and will be passed over this week to Insight for preparation for publication in a professional format. Mark Goldstein noted that Oris Friesen spent some time improving the wording in the "Recommendations at a Glance" section of the Executive Summary.

Steve proposed that the report include an additional statement about establishing a digital access assessment system to provide data on current and future digital access needs for connectivity, devices, tech support, professional development, and funding requirements. John Kelly responded the goal should be just to have enough data to make decisions. Karen Ziegler added that data is important but it should not be emphasized in the report as another project to undertake. Henry Goldberg remarked that there is already a statement in the "Next Steps" section of the Executive Summary about doing further data collection work in the future.

Mark Goldstein noted that he put information about three recent relevant reports in the Appendix Chat: ETI Software Solutions' Broadband Funding Resource Guide, Sapronov & Associates overview of telecom policy positions of the two presidential candidates, and the Benton Foundation's public-private partnerships models for broadband infrastructure that complements the US Ignite models discussed in the task force recommendations report.

## **Next Steps**

Steve requested participants to contact him if they wish to be a part of the Marketing Team to develop and manage a marketing strategy for distributing the report and marketing the task force.

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, October 26th 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: (7:48 AM)

[file: ETI Software Solutions - Broadband Funding Resource Guide Compiled by Craig Settles 2020.pdf]

ETI Software Solutions - Broadband Funding Resource Guide Compiled by Craig Settles uploaded and available at <https://etisoftware.com/broadband-funding-resource-guide/>

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:50 AM)

[file: Saprnov& Associates - Presidential Election Politics & Telecommunications Alert 10\_16\_20.pdf]

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:50 AM)

Saprnov& Associates released a client briefing on Presidential Election Politics & Telecommunications Alert comparing telecom issues under each of the two presidential candidates. Uploaded and available at <http://wstelecomlaw.com/2020/10/16953/>

From Nicole Umayam to Everyone: (7:52 AM)

NTIA is coordinating with FCC on an updated broadband availability map. They're working state by state: <https://www.ntia.doc.gov/category/national-broadband-availability-map>

From Karen Ziegler to Everyone: (7:54 AM)

<https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/#/>

From Nicole Umayam to Everyone: (7:55 AM)

Another option is to look at data on broadband subscriptions, from the Census American Community Survey: <https://arcg.is/08f5iG>

From Malavika Muralidharan - to Everyone: (7:57 AM)

UPCOMING SHLB WEBINARS: October 30, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. ET: Successful Strategies for Obtaining E-rate Category Two Support (AnchorNets Online workshop) Internal Connections. Register here <https://www.anchornets.org/register>

From Malavika Muralidharan - to Everyone: (7:58 AM)

ERATE TREND REPORT 2020 (Survey done in June 2020) Funds For Learning 2020 E-rate Trends Report <https://www.fundsforlearning.com/2020ErateTrends>

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (8:01 AM)

[file: Benton Foundation - Public Infrastructure-Private Service Shared-Risk Partnership Model for 21st Century Broadband Infrastructure 10\_20.pdf]

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (8:01 AM)

Benton & CLIC rased a great new report, Public Infrastructure-Private Service Shared-Risk Partnership Model for 21st Century Broadband Infrastructure complementing US Ignite report we've been touting. Uploaded and available at <https://www.benton.org/publications/public-infrastructureprivate-service> FYI.

From Sophia to Everyone: (8:06 AM)

I'm in agreement with ehT

From Sophia to Everyone: (8:06 AM)

what John just said! We all know enough about the problem to gather here every Monday.

From John Kelly to Everyone: (8:21 AM)

thanks all. talk to you soon!

From Tracey Beal to Everyone: (8:28 AM)

School Connect is loving on teachers in the month of November....We are looking for organizations who would like to adopt a school to provide care packages for teachers. School Connect will provide a box and a few treasures. The adopting org would add some snacks and treasures to the box and deliver to their school. Let me know if your org would like to participate! Tracey@schoolconnectaz.org

From Karen Ziegler to Everyone: (8:28 AM)

Need to drop for another call

From Tracey Beal to Everyone: (8:32 AM)

Thanks so much for the good info, Will! Have a great day everyone!

From Robert Alvarado to Everyone: (8:33 AM)

Need to go to next meeting. Thank you all have a great day.