Greater Arizona Educational Leadership
AZBSN Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network
Arizona Telecommunications and Information Council

September 21, 2020 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Andrew Bevington, Melissa Boydston, Amanda Bruno, Michael Cohen, Jerry Crow, Steve Daurio, Alexandra Dominguez, Terence Ford, Ian Hathcock, Holly Henley, Steve Hill, Shereka Jackson, John Kelly, Tarma Liranzo, Derek Masseth, Mala Muralidharan, Peter Newbegin, Mauricio Orozco, Cody Pedersen, Lea Marquez Peterson, Lawrie Prickett, Alan Pruitt, Michelle Simon, Tracy Rexroat, Jeff Sobotka, Nicole Umayam, Karen Ziegler

Updates: State Broadband Director, AZ State Library, ACC

State Broadband Director Update

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

Jeff met last week with the state broadband directors of all 50 states at the "State Broadband Leaders Network" meeting organized by the NTIA. Some states, such as Utah and Colorado, have a long history and considerable state funding for broadband projects, whereas some states may have rushed too quickly in building networking solutions that are inadequate for future needs. Arizona's broadband infrastructure and Arizona State Library technical support/digital inclusion initiatives were well-received. There is an NTIA broadband mapping initiative underway that Jeff believes will be important for Arizona.

The Arizona Legislature will begin their next session in January 2021. Jeff wants to ensure that broadband is a priority for this session, with a particular focus on the state Rural Broadband Development Grants (RBDGs) program that helps fill in gaps not addressed by federal grants (which Arizona can apply for but are difficult to get). Arizona has been successful in obtaining FCC E-rate grants but matching funds are needed for federal grants programs.

Jeff is working with ADOT on reviewing the responses received to their RFI regarding public-private partnerships for fiber middle-mile infrastructure along state highways to reach Arizona rural communities. Jeff stated they received a variety of significant responses from consultants and service providers. ADOT will be publishing a public recommendations report based on these responses.

Jeff commented that.the Western Arizona Economic Development District (WAEDD) is an important partner in obtaining federal broadband grants to support western Arizona's rural and low population density application and technology needs. Jeff noted that Alan Pruitt has been a

key player in obtaining the WAEDD federal grants, and Steve Peters invited Alan to speak to the task force about their work at an upcoming task force meeting.

Arizona State Library Update

Mala Muralidharan, E-rate Administrator for Public Libraries at the Arizona State Library, reported on her recent activities.   As discussed at the last task force meeting, the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB) and the American Library Association (ALA) have been promoting proposals to improve federal E-rate funding for the COVID-19 crisis, and the State E-rate Coordinators Alliance (SECA) took the lead to put together a request to the FCC on this. The FCC responded to this request by opening up a 2nd window for schools to apply for additional E-rate funding – the application deadline is October 16, 2020. This additional E-rate funding will support on-campus school Internet access needs (including Wi-Fi to parking lots but not student Internet access from home) to provide additional bandwidth for online classes from service providers already providing the E-rate services for these schools.

Mala noted that a coalition of federal agencies has organized a 2020 National Tribal Broadband Summit taking place September 21-25th as a virtual meeting. This summit will share best practices, new ideas, and lessons learned in providing high-speed Internet to Native American tribes, homes, and businesses. It will include sessions on planning, telehealth, education, and economic development. See the link in the Appendix Chat for information about this summit.

Nicole Umayam, Digital Inclusion Library Consultant at the Arizona State Library, reported on her recent activities. As discussed at previous task force meetings, the Connect-Arizona Portal, an initiative of the Arizona State Library, School Connect, and Common Sense Media, provides a public Wi-Fi hotspots map, information on connectivity options for low-income households, and digital literacy training and technical support. The Wi-Fi Map is being used extensively with about 99,800 views so far, and the AZ LibTAP free tech support team has responded to 160 calls so far. They are still working on determining what additional resources to put on the portal, which may include information useful to Native American tribes. Jeff Sobotka commented partnering with tribes is important to understand their needs and broadband directions. Nicole added that tribes can now apply to the FCC for use of 2.5 GHz wireless spectrum for their broadband needs.

 ACC Update

Lea Marquez Peterson, Commissioner of the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC), reported on her recent activities.

Lea is promoting the Connect-Arizona portal, and commented that their addition of low-cost Internet service offers is a valuable component of the site.

As discussed at previous task force meetings, Lea is working on expanding the use of the Arizona Universal Service Fund (AUSF) from telephone land lines in high-cost areas to include support for broadband services in these areas. The AUSF currently generates about $500,000 per year in funding. Lea intends to bring up the issue of expanding the AUSF to support broadband to other ACC commissioners in October. Mark Goldstein noted that he and John Kelly wrote the report for the ACC 25 years ago that advocated for the formation of the AUSF, and believes the AUSF should be augmented to support broadband going forward.

Sun Corridor Network

Derek Masseth, Executive Director of the Sun Corridor Network (SCN), overviewed the Sun Corridor Network mission, some recent directions, and issues for the future. See recent past task force meeting reports for more discussion of SCN.

The Sun Corridor Network has traditionally been the high-speed, low-latency research and education network that meets the needs of the three state universities (University of Arizona, ASU, and NAU), connecting them to the national Internet2 research and education network as well as high-speed access to the public Internet. SCN has been operating for 8 years. The SCN has been expanding to connect some community colleges and K-12 school districts, and is an eligible E-rate service provider. The SCN is working on expanding its core network connecting the cities of Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff to 400 Gbps with redundant paths from the existing 100 Gbps paths. When connecting end-user sites, SCN mostly partners with commercial service providers but in some cases it builds its own networks.

Derek noted that the Arizona Dept. of Education, the Arizona Dept. of Administration, and the Arizona Commerce Authority have expressed interest in the SCN providing connectivity to organizations beyond the three state universities.

Steve Peters asked if the SCN intends on becoming a 501(c)(3) organization in the future. Derek stated that currently about 50% of SCN's funding comes from the three universities (which are 501(c)(3)s) and the other 50% comes mostly from community colleges and school districts E-rate funding. There has not yet been discussion of whether the SCN should become a 501(c)(3), and a move in this direction would depend on what state needs are and whether these needs can be filled within the current SCN organizational structure. The SCN is also pursuing federal grants, and currently has received an NSF grant for exploring homework gap issues using community Wi-Fi.

Steve Peters asked what additional support the SCN requires from the state government. Derek responded that if Arizona aspires to function in broadband like Utah, where there is a state education and telehealth network that coordinates all E-rate services for the state's schools, this would require additional state funding. The Utah education and telehealth network receives about a $15 million annual grant from their state government. Derek added that there is a lot of potential for the SCN to serve broader education and telehealth needs of the state, but this would require a new business model.

Steve Peters asked if SCN could have a role in supporting community networks. Derek responded that SCN's mission is to support research and education, so it has to be careful not to go beyond this mission in supporting other community broadband applications. The NSF grant for community Wi-Fi in Page is focused on the homework gap.

Steve Peters suggested that the task force recommendations report include a recommendation that a strategic planning process for the SCN be established to consider potential new business models such as becoming a 501(c)(3) and the role it has in community networks. John Kelly asked about the origin story and milestones achieved by the Utah education and telehealth network since it is a top-down approach that contrasts with the Arizona bottom-up approach. Derek responded that the key differentiators from Arizona are that the Utah network provides statewide coordination for their E-rate process and the Utah network works closely with their state department of transportation in deploying fiber along state highways (Mark Goldstein commented on the Utah DOT in the Appendix chat). Steve asked how the Governor's GEER funding/Smart Highways initiative for fiber deployment along state highways relates to this.

Derek responded that the SCN has been involved with such fiber deployment discussions and has capacity on the I-17/I-19 routes – the key issue for deploying fiber along I-40 will be to use it for middle-mile fiber laterals connecting rural communities (there is already long-haul fiber there). Derek concluded stating he would support including the recommendation of establishing an SCN strategic planning process in the task force recommendations report.

Task Force Recommendations Report

Mark Goldstein reviewed his revised draft of the task force recommendations document at the Technology Subcommittee meeting on September 15th, and included feedback on the body of the report and Appendices. The report was passed to Steve Peters and Karen Ziegler for further editing.

Steve Peters stated that he, Karen, and Mark have been working on revising and finalizing the task force recommendations report. Steve noted that an executive summary and up-front summary of the recommendations has been included. Karen commented that the goal of the revision has been to make the document more clear and concise. Mark commented that there is now a separate Appendix on state and community business model options, and responding to Ben Blink's request there is an Appendix on broadband activities nationally and in other states.

Steve stated the report should be finalized in the next couple of days for the overall task force to review.

Next Steps

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, September 28th at 7:30 am.

This week, the Technology subcommittee will meet on Tuesday September 22nd at 9:30 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: (7:32 AM)

[file: AZBSN COVID-19 Task Force Report & Recommendations Draft V02A 09_21_20B Clean.docx]
  Here's a snapshot of the current report from Google Docs imported into Word and cleaned up a bit. Lots of Google Doc anomalies going back & forth, but this may be useful for your review as we continue on. Cheers!

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:33 AM)
  Word version best viewed with Markup Off, but current comments are present.

From Nicole Umayam to Everyone: (7:50 AM)
  https://www.imls.gov/news/federal-coalition-announces-second-summit-improving-broadband-access-indian-country

From Nicole Umayam to Everyone: (7:55 AM)
  Rural Tribal Spectrum Applications:
https://fcc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b51c97987df5452da4a2b37ec6c
28d09

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (7:56 AM)
  FCC Opens Second E-Rate Application Window for Funding Year 2020 -
https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-opens-second-e-rate-application-window-funding-year-2020

From Jeff Sobotka to Everyone: (7:57 AM)
  Have a great week everyone!

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (8:05 AM)

[file: US Telecom - Broadband Pricing Index 2020.pdf]
  US Telecom - Broadband Pricing Index 2020 just published. Here's a copy.

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (8:21 AM)

[file: UDOT Utah Fiber Expansion Model V2.docx]

From Mark Goldstein to Everyone: (8:21 AM)
  Here's a UDOT Utah Fiber Expansion Model V2 doc I recently picked up. Not sure of the year
published, but FYI.

From Malavika Muralidharan to Everyone: (8:26 AM)
  Derek is right... There are so many points at which an E-rate applicants can drop the ball and
hence not encumber or claim the funds, so many rules that they have to keep pace with...
everything has a deadline, there is not much room or forgiveness for errors..

From Derek Masseth to Everyone: (8:28 AM)
  Thanks Mala! Many of the 'smaller' E-rate eligible entities struggle within that ecosystem.

From Malavika Muralidharan to Steve Peters(Privately) : (08:29 AM)
Steve... are we going to do the rest of the agenda?

From DerekMasseth : (08:30) AM)
Many of the 'smaller' E-rate eligible entities struggle within that ecosystem.

From Lawrie Prickett : (08:31 AM)
Great talk today. Thank you everyone.

From Mauricio : (08:33 AM)
Any basic technology literacy supports/education for end users included in report? Thanks

From Steve Peters : (08:35 AM)
Mauricio Yes, absolutely

From Mauricio(08:35 AM)
Thanks

From Shereka Jackson : (08:36 AM)
thanks for the invite