Broadband Advisory Council Meeting Notes July 14, 2020

Kelleigh – Utah Broadband Outreach Center

The state of Utah was given CARES funding for broadband development and technological expansion for educational institutions. Ray Timothy was charged with forming a statewide tech strategy for K12 and higher education. Kelleigh's team was approved for $125 million, which should fund a number of projects meant for equipment, software, professional development, and services meant for K12 and higher ed institutions. All the funds must be spent in 6 months and must follow certain regulations, ie the funds must respond to coronavirus and not be used for anything that is already approved in a state budget. All K12 institutions can upgrade their wifi to wifi 6 through this initiative and expand wifi hotspots to different areas on school grounds to better facilitate remote learning and social distancing. Projects were meant to create a lasting impact that would address school needs beyond just the immediate response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Another item through this project is the expansion of security programs and an increase in devices for higher learning institutions. Some hotspots will be established for a year through the funding, and professional development will be offered for K12 teachers, especially for younger classes where teachers may not have had the opportunity to work with online resources in the classrooms before. Different online literacy courses and prep courses will be offered for students, and fiber projects will be minimal because of the time window of the project. About 75-80 projects are currently under consideration for this funding, and Kelleigh's team is engaging in aggressive purchasing to avoid supply chain hook-ups and delays when spending this funding.

Peter Jay – Utah Ignite

Utah Ignite is a Smart Gigabit Community partnered with Point of the Mountain Chamber of Commerce. They have focused on the Internet of Things and are currently focusing on app development and "Smart Cities" projects. They engage in education and networking efforts, and some of their projects have focused on improving Utah air quality, VR classrooms, increasing browser speeds and deep brain stimulation for telehealth efforts. Their UVU Smart Cities Lab includes the UVU Business Resource Center, a 10GB connection donated through UTOPIA, Utah open source, and tools for

app development. There are also a number of federal grants related to Smart City Development.

Jeff Egly - UETN

Manila and Dutch John in Daggett County are being connected to Vernal through fiber expansions by Strata Networks, and San Juan County is also expanding their fiber connections. This is the first major installation of fiber connections for Daggett County. The San Juan County projects connects libraries and schools in White Mesa (Ute Tribe), Montezuma Creek, and Bluff to Blanding through 42 miles of fiber cable. Collaboration with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Ute and Navajo tribal officials have slowed the project a bit because of approvals that need to be made. The outbreak issues and face-to-face aspect of moving this project along have also stalled progress. Expansions to Monument Valley and Navajo Mountain still need to be approved. Brock O'Hansen from Emery Telecomm spoke up and gave an update on how everything is ready for construction on the Navajo portion of the project, they are just waiting for BIA signing off. Dave Ryan also spoke up and emphasized how fiber installation is ahead of schedule in Daggett County. Melinda Talbot with UETN asked Dave what the turn-up date would be, and Dave estimated the first or second week of August. James Toledo of the Utah Department of Indian Affairs offered to reach out to the federl Bureau of Indian Affairs from the Navajo side to get the San Juan project moving.

Liz Gabbitas - State Library

Libraries have been told in the CARES Act to focus on digital network access, including procuring IT support and devices for public use. Utah libraries were given $300,000 as part of this grant. The state wants to use CARES funds to expand broadband access and digital inclusion. Funds were used to help the broadband expansion for San Juan County libraries in Montezuma Creek and Bluff. Goshute Reservation communities also have an opportunity to be connected through EBS radios. White Mesa will also receive equipment through CARES funding after fiber expansion is completed. Half of the funds are reserved for digital inclusion, including direct grants and providing hotspots and approving other projects for local libraries. A workshop series is in the works for those who receive direct grants. About 15% of the remaining funds are being held for future allocation. Potential partnerships exist between libraries, schools, and communities for future projects, but libraries are also facing challenges regarding FCC restrictions and infrastructure.

Allison Stapleton-Shrivastava – GOED

Communities that were/are hard-hit by coronavirus are also typically are less connected than other groups. Almost half of San Juan County does not have broadband access, and native communities are particularly hard hit in both regards. San Juan county also had the worst broadband connectivity to unemployment ratio (68%) with the statewide ratio sitting at 15.8%. Households in counties hit hard by the pandemic are less likely to have access to broadband, whether in rural or urban counties (ie Davis and San Juan vs. their neighbors). Underserved communities go underserved in multiple ways. Glenn Ricart asked some clarifying questions on availability of broadband for households. Jacob Brace asked about social determinants of health and whether those played in to Allison's analysis. Douglas Meredith asked about the definition of broadband in the data, which was broadband internet presence in the home when looking at households. He also pointed out that the analysis fit well with a Pew analysis that was done recently.

Douglas Meredith – JSI, URTA

URTA has some data on how rural carriers addressed the challenge of covid-19. There was a pledge initiated by the FCC to address telecomm issues, and many rural carriers responded positively, offering speed programs and other perks through the early days of the pandemic. Many carriers are working with districts directly or UETN. Douglas stressed supply and demand for service and installation that was sparked by the pandemic and how that has influenced efforts to expand connectivity to different regions, even when faced with issues like permitting and high cost. Many people facing financial hardship cannot afford broadband, and will fall further behind in terms of education and quality of life because of it. Many do not meet minimum income requirements for government assistance. Jim Stewart jumped in and expressed how URTA and rural carriers have done a good job at assisting many households, and future plans should address their efforts.

Sarah Young – Utah Education Network

There are a lot of issues facing teachers and digital learning efforts. A lot of work has been done to increase capacity. Weber school district did some Canvas training for teachers, and expected half of the teachers to participate in the training, while actual turnout was about 90%. Teachers want to help and be effective but need some training

and resources in order to implement it effectively. Douglas asked whether everyone in the state would be using the same platform, and Sarah emphasized that while many would be moving to Canvas, there would still be varied platforms in different districts, but efforts would be undertaken to minimize the number of platforms required by a single class for student participation.

Jim Stewart - Utah Education Network

Jim has heard estimates of 30% of students being held back at home once school starts again, so blended learning will not go away. District are undertaking schedule changes and pedagogical changes and cloud filtering to try and adapt. Jim stated that 400,000+ devices were taken home for remote learning at the end of school and expects maybe 600,000 devices being used in Utah for remote learning by students. There is some frustration because a lot of resources are tied up in schools for UEN, and if access to schools is limited then so is much of their support. Comcast and other corporations are stepping up to collaborate with schools and governments in order to address the issues that are arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

Rebecca Dilg asked the meeting whether there was any potential for state-led digital inclusion program. Jim Stewart emphasized a long-term investment in broadband and fiber for rural communities and underserved communities. Douglas Meredith referenced supply and demand again and the relationship between carriers and customers, which is partially enabled by government involvement. Roger Timmerman brought up how important broadband is and how it ought to be treated the same as roads and other utilities in terms of government sponsorship and community responsibility. Roger wants to see more competition so communities can get more involved in digital inclusion, especially for rural communities. Focus on broadband needs to replace focus on telephone landlines and other traditional yet archaic systems. Sarah Young also pointed out that it is vital to include Spanish-speaking communities by using multilingual tools. Vikram Ravi spoke up and stated that there's been a lack of funding for digital inclusion programs, especially for sustainable programs. Most private involvement seems to be a one-time deal. Vikram suggested setting up sustainable refurbishing ecosystems in Utah to sustain the efforts of state digital inclusion.

Rebecca Dilg closed by expressing her appreciation for everyone's involvement and mentioning the updated broadband website.