BCN Advisory Council Minutes

UW Pyle Center, 12/17/2009 3PM

Attendees: Jay Jaeger, Tom Taibl, Bob Bocher, Bruce Mathew (phone), Mike Mietz (phone), Maria Alvarez-Stroud (UW Extension), Tim Schell (phone), Tara Baxter, Jamie Poindexter, Bruce Reines (phone), Joan Wade (phone), Paul Nelson

Introductions

Bob Bocher "chair for a day". Well Done !!

DOA BCN Grant Status

The DOA BCN Grant has passed thru the first round, into the "due diligence" phase. DOA has prepared answers to questions, and clarifications. The evaluators apparently misunderstood the situation with respect to match. DOA has been concentrating on providing information on who will benefit from the project, and expects to have answers done this week.

There is also a question on environmental impacts. But given our sites, that is a lot of work, and WBAA is working on that. Many are existing rights-of-way for which there will not be issues. For other cases, however, the response needs to consider a lot of things: tribal lands, wetlands and so on. AT&T/WBAA has brought in temps, and the BCN Advisory Council thanks them for their efforts. Hopes are to get this done next week.

The completed response must be completed by the end of the month.

There has been an announcement for the first award, announced by the Vice President of the US. Conversations indicate announcements will likely be made in "weekly waves".

Some returned funds (TARP funds for example) could possibly end up enhancing this program.

UW Extension CAN ARRA Grant Status

The group is preparing for round 2, with a pilot/community emphasis involving five communities. UW Extension is involved as they see the merit and impact, even though it may not seem an intuitive fit. There were criteria used to look for communities that were ready for being community area network sponsors, had appropriate characteristics and would not be "taken aback" by the need for a match. The five are: Superior, Platteville, Eau Claire (who will help guide the others), Wausau and Menomonee Nation.

The Menomonee Nation is working with Charter on infrastructure, and may require more outreach to help people understand the use of such facilities.

UW and the UW Extension are working with DOA as necessary in partnership, and working to help communities take the central role.

NTIA and RUS issued a public comment regarding round 2, recognizing challenges involved in getting public entities to apply and working thru the process. There is no longer an expectation for a third round. We expect announcements regarding application process towards the end of January.

The FCC national broadband plan is due February 17th, and has been accepting public comment.

DOA Updates

Teach subsidy Update:

In November DOA announced two major changes bandwidth. The unofficial cap of 45Mb has been removed, and the incremental pricing on data service has been abandoned. The latter was discouraging use of additional bandwidth in support of classrooms. There is now a fixed price from 3Mb to 100Mb, but higher bandwidth usage requires justification based on need, lest the bandwidth requests "explode". The rate change takes effect January 1st. One last set of invoices will go out at current rates, and were mailed yesterday, 12/16/2009.

The current guideline of 80% use doesn't work for new applications, especially ones that are not fully characterized. (Editorial: there would have also been good reason to question that as a breakpoint anyway, since a channel that is 67% utilized over long periods of time will experience significant periods of saturation). Generally DOA is trying to provide sufficient headroom, and DOA is finding that organizations are not asking for more than they need.

How do we feel about sustainability over 2 – 3 year medium term if we do not succeed with grant? DOA responded that this current strategy is likely to be sustainable for 2 – 3 years at the current rates, but after that may hit a "crunch". Additional unforseen demand would also create issues, unless there is more funding or a change in rate structure.

There is still wiring loan repayment as part of the TEACH financial structure, but these are decreasing. Refinancing has resulted in a lower FY10 payment, but stretched the payments out some more.

We are grateful for this announcement, and give our thanks to DOA and WBAA to make this work.

Executive Committee Elections

No additional nominations were provided aside from the incumbents.

All elections were passed by unanimous assent. Ed Meachen had given his willingness to serve.

Chair: Tim Schell.

Vice-Chair: Ed Meachen

At Large: Joan Wade

Next year's meetings

Recommendation was that we continue to meet on the 3rd Thursday, each quarter, unless more are required. There was no dissent.

The meeting dates will be set as : March 18, June 17, Sept. 16, Dec. 16, all 2010.

Pyle resources: Jay Jaeger will schedule, and refer to Jamie Poindexter should assistance on account codes be required.

2010 Topics

- Grants
- Contract renegotiation – this topic will be dependent upon results of grant application.
  - Work has been going on "paving the way" for the changes based on hopeful expectation that we will be successful.
- We hope to talk in March about the "next thing" to work towards.
  - Bandwidth greater than 100Mb. Current contract should allow us to scale. DOA has already done site-specific pricing on and individual case basis to 200Mb (in general, for bandwidth more than 100Mb), and price is expected to not exceed postalized rates for comparable bandwidth. We have some sites in Milwaukee at 1Gb for $6000/month.
- Outreach to customers on how to make better use of the public investment in public infrastructure.
  - Educational: hosted services
- National broadband strategy. (The one due to Congress on February 17th from the FCC). We have some concern that the plan could be put in place, but with no way to execute it at a national level. (Add to agenda for March).

Next Meeting: March 18, 2009, 3PM. Room TBA