Meeting Minutes

Ref: Broadband Advisory Council Planning Session   **Date: 10.26.2021**

Place: MS Teams Virtual Meeting

ATTENDEES	Jim Stritzinger, Mike Herzberger, Anna Berger, Casi Sims, Nanette Edwards, Dawn Hipp, Madeleine McGee, Mike Couick, Nola Armstrong, Peggy McLean, Ray Sharpe, Betsy Carpentier, Melanie Barton, Kathy Schwarting, Valarie Byrd

A meeting was held on 10.26.2021 from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM virtually, via Microsoft Teams. This document summarizes discussions and action items covered during the meeting.

DISCUSSIONS

- Group observed BBAC Round Robin Session – Details relating to updates shared were as follows:
  - SCAC – Tracking US Treasury discussions for additional federal funding
  - Governor's Office – ARPA recommendations work ongoing
  - Commerce – New Secretary – Executive retreat to occur next month focused on vision planning
  - ECSC – Tracking federal funds and upcoming infrastructure bill – Expressed challenge from electric cooperatives perspective due to lack of speed with which funds are becoming available - Suggested BBAC should consider ways to help expedite distribution of funds
  - TogetherSC – Working to identify groups starting to build regional collaboratives focusing on Access – Looking at 3 county entities coordinating access work. Referenced ARPA and distribution of funding to local communities, coordinating with city and county in Hilton Head, there are a few counties beginning to address broadband access with their ARPA funds
  - SCTBA – Work ongoing to support upcoming fall conference scheduled for November 9-11 - SC Broadband Office will be presenting
  - SC Dept of Education – Working with ORS on a pilot for implementation of satellite Internet for teachers using Starlink technology
  - Palmetto Care Connections – New Director of Digital Literacy - Scheduled telehealth summit for Nov 9-10th – SC Broadband Office will be presenting – The summit will focus on Broadband use application(s), teaching folks how to use Telehealth – funding has come through DHEC and Spectrum – Went to

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legislature asking for funding to bring summit platform to all counties – Focusing on counties where health disparities are occurring – Also teaching folks about cybersecurity

- ORS Updates
    ○ Presented to house subcommittee – Discussion circling on capital projects funds ~$188 million for South Carolina if the State makes the request for these funds to the US Treasury – More information can be found here: https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/capital-projects-fund - Date general assembly must move on requesting these federal dollars is December 27th – ORS tentatively scheduled to go back to senate ARPA committee on November 9th
    ○ More on federal funds - $2.5 billion relates specifically to ARPA and distribution of those funds to all 50 states and US Territories, then a second bucket of funding, $188 million (for SC) which requires some additional steps to obtain – If request for funds is approved by the Federal Government, 5% can be used for management. Must provide a plan on how to use the $188 million. It's designed to directly address COVID focusing on work, education, and health monitoring – must do all three things to use the money in accordance with provisions set forth by US Treasury Dept.
    ○ Work ongoing to prepare next round of eligibility maps. ORS will also publish a GIS-based web map service which will allow ISPs to view and interact with census blocks eligible for state funds in their own respective GIS systems.
    ○ Work underway to draft BB Plan – BBAC to review draft during first Quarter of new Calendar Year – Draft to be reviewed and commented upon by BBAC prior to final publication and distribution to General Assembly
    ○ Currently funded grants include CARES II and Rural Broadband Grant Funds through the Department of Commerce - Work is ongoing, site inspections and quarterly reporting from ISPs is underway
    ○ New funds – ARPA is awaiting final approval from the General Assembly, a provision is included for developing a Campaign to support adoption and use. Capital Projects Funds (refer to the above bullets). NTIA grant submitted by SC Broadband Office, focus is on rebuilding 6 main streets across the State, total request was made for ~$11 million, awaiting final word from NTIA

- Group reviewed results from Survey – Refer to PDF of slide deck attached to minutes
- Open Discussion   ○ Kathy – Suggested a need for low-income Internet packages - What are the ISP's doing to bolster adoption and use? Jim made reference to ORS broadband grants scoring additional points on submissions around whether a low-cost offering existed as part of their proposal

- o Nanette suggested capital project funds may come with certain requirements, e.g. low-income requirement as a provision of obtaining the funding also.
- o More on federal funds - $2.5 billion relates specifically to ARPA and distributing of those funds to all 50 states and US Territories, then a second bucket of funding, $188 million (for SC)
- o Mike C. indicated from an electric cooperative perspective, they only provide service and don't provide any programming like cable providers, there are differences between business models between cable, electric, and phone companies, despite all providing broadband service - BBAC should keep this in mind

- Additional members to consider for inclusion in the BBAC – ORS anticipates many stakeholders that will support the BBAC but intends to keep the council itself to around 15 participants/entities (not including ORS staff in this count). Members will have overlapping terms looking over the next 5-year timeline, with members having 1, 2, or 3-year term limits. Currently included:

1. SCAC - SC Association of Counties
2. Governor's Office
3. Dept of Commerce
4. ECSC - Electric Cooperatives of SC
5. TogetherSC
6. SCTBA - SC Telecommuncations and Broadband Association
7. SC Dept of Education
8. Palmetto Care Connections (Representing Telehealth)
9. SCACED – SC Association for Community Economic Development
10. Dominion Energy (Representing Investor-owned Utilities)
11. SC State Library System
12. SCCTA - SC Cable Television Association

- Additional entities ORS is considering based on feedback from the BBAC include, but aren't limited to the following:
13. SC Municipal Association, (which includes a main street focus)
14. SC Competitive Council
15. Representation from Higher Education
16. SC Telephone Coalition

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE

• ORS to submit a letter to each BBAC member thanking them for their participation on the council, ORS to follow up prior to the letter being distributed to discuss term limit for a given entity	ORS	Prior to next meeting
• Schedule next BBAC meeting during the first week of January – poll to be forthcoming	ORS	< 1 week
• ORS to build out grant document between now and the end of the year related to disbursement of ARPA funding – It's a one-way contract ORS will send out to ISP's, ORS to send a copy to the BBAC for review/comment prior to distribution	ORS	2-3 weeks
• Suggested the BBAC compile and present a talking points document outlining the need to expedite appropriation and disbursement of federal/state funds to support Broadband Access - Please submit bullets back to ORS on this topic from the collective perspectives of the entity for which you represent	Group-wide	2 weeks