Broadband Advisory Council

October 23, 2024
SC Office of Regulatory Staff
At the Orangeburg County Public Library
1645 Russell St, Orangeburg, SC 29115

In-Person Meeting
10:00A.M. - 12:00P.M.

AGENDA

I. **Welcome**
    a. Helene/Weather Impacts on Broadband
        i. SC Broadband is working with ISPs to restore service
        ii. Restoring broadband network is infinitely more difficult than restoring power line.
        iii. From an electric side, one of the main reasons we don't go underground is it's real expensive. Because of the way regulation works, any capital improvement an electric utility makes would be passed on to the ratepayers.
        iv. Everybody clambering for lines to go underground, but a few months later, there would be rate shock.
        v. If you go underground with electric lines, it is a lot more difficult to restore them.
        vi. About 40% more expensive to do something underground. The terrain in mountain areas- it's just not economical to do this.
        vii. Any time you're going underground- terrain, lots of wires next to each other that can't be. There may need to be banked conduit put into the ground, and it starts escalating cost.
        viii. Takes more time- might not meet project timelines

II. **Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Efforts – Ashely Bryan**

III. **Program Plan Overview**
    a. See presentation for proposed project overview

IV. **Workshop: Apprenticeships & Digital Navigators**
    a. See worksheets for questions.

Question 1: Roles

- Device refurbishment, digital navigation (technical support, customer interaction), cybersecurity, dedicated GIS person
- Consider pursuing nontraditional workers.
    o Utilize HBCUs in the area

- Dual language or multilingual hire- they have to have task specificity
- Detail oriented, organized, time management
- GIS knowledge
- Cybersecurity knowledge
- Most examples currently listed are physical labor
- Additional needs:
  - Should be at least basic technology skills
    - Network, security
  - Customer service- need to be able to communicate with those they are trying to support
  - Determined needs of individual corporations who will bring these people on
    - What job does the employer need to have done? What skills do you need the person to have?
    - Specific criteria for the position needed
    - What training needs would your organization have for that individual?
- Digital Navigators – Skillsets/How to make requirements for service provided?
  - Patience
  - Empathy
  - Cultural awareness
  - Important for this person to have technical knowledge, but not so entrenched that they don't have soft skills.
  - Folks need to be able to connect and teach some of the classes, but also have the knowledge of when they need to reach out to others.
  - Able to break down to task specificity – what we need a digital navigator to be able to say
  - Relatable
  - Adaptable- will likely work in multiple locations. Need to be able to identify need in the field and be able to describe it.

Question 2: How do we balance the compliance piece? Federal funds/flexibility.

- Opportunity for position to be useful within an organization or other areas- GIS is a particular need
- Very helpful within electric industry for GIS person to work on GIS issues related to broadband and electric infrastructure -getting more value
  - GIS person is important because it is really hard for everyone to agree on system that says this is where this stuff is. GIS is a standardized way where everyone can agree where this is.
    - Example: DOT has own internal system for determining along roadways where incidents occur.
      - Important to know locations, track if something has happened, be able to find it and fix it.
      - Difficulty- addresses. You have layers of information that need to be corresponding with underlying matrix. Correlate this level of data with other data levels and underlying matrix.

- Would cooperatives see a need where this type of apprenticeship could train utility locators?
  - Feedback from our folks- a lot of these programs are fantastic. A lot of strengths. The more local and more stripped down in entities, the harder it is to comply with all those things. The more benefit people can bring along with them, the more we can justify bringing them along. The more hats these folks can wear, the better.
  - Locates, GIS, permitting are all things where this would be useful
- Something in there that has requirements to ensure they are learning- can further their careers
- Is this a DOL approved registered apprenticeship?
  - No, but one of the things we're hoping to do is pitch this to Apprenticeship Carolina.
  - Not about apprenticeship training, but some encouragement to formalize if you would like it.
  - If we inadvertently call it a grant, it is a stipend.
  - They do go through the DOL registered apprenticeship check. Might be a way to mitigate questions from one to another.
  - Dr. Jeter – Benedict is an HBCU apprenticeship site- employers can hire someone from their staff to supervise apprenticeship. Setting up now for healthcare workers. DOL categories, lay out what a person should learn/do in this job capacity.
- Off the shelf mentor/management model
  - Is there someone external as part of the program that can do some of the handholding for the employer.
- Transitions: Almost paid internship that could move into long-term career
  - Look for employees after the six months to take them on as full-time employees
  - Most people are fielding management network jobs.
  - Free six-month trial
  - Makes apprentice more hirable due to training
- Can some of these positions be added to the apprenticeship programs?
  - Department of Labor
  - Cash flow perspective- not creating administrative burden.
    - Reimbursement perspective- if the entity had the power to do it, that would be helpful. Monthly would be helpful. Weekly would be great.
- Originally it says "can only be approved for a maximum of two apprenticeships for an organization"
  - Would we want to delineate this by region? That way organizations can have people in different areas of the state.
- Need to define organization
- Area of collaboration- State organizations such as DOT, Co-ops (not just electric), etc.
  - Where can apprentices be placed?
  - Would state agencies be able to match timeline? Add to their number of hires?

Question 3: Reporting/Measuring impact of individuals hire and impact on organization mission

- Immediately thought of education and classes/digital course learning
  - Eligible positions- currently geared more tore ISPs
  - Would probably gear more toward other relevant compelling positions

- Optional Measures/Metrics:
  - Number of hours worked per month/week
  - Post class surveys could help build metric
  - Number of people served
  - Rural committee engagement by direct outreach
  - Number of partners leveraged for success
  - Follow up with community touch/points
  - Make accountability decisions right upfront so they have an MOU for the six months
  - Develop data collection systems- get input on that. Collect data on individuals they provide digital navigation services to.
  - Stipend- half at the beginning/half at the end. After you've accomplished elements expected.
  - Agreed on number of engagements in the community.
  - Track events digital navigators go to
  - High level of individuals that are already connected to community and know lots about the systems due to their professions
  - Pretest/post test
  - Outcome measure- tied to broadband option rate or measure if you're thinking about that organization that applies to the apprenticeship
- Realistic Deliverables for Organizations
  - What can the stipend be used for?
    - Staffing/salary/equipment/administrative costs, etc.?
      - That needs to be defined.
  - Considerations:
    - What can the stipend be used for?
      - Staffing, salary, equipment, administrative costs, etc.?
      - This needs to be defined.
    - How much do you have to work with?
    - The first thing would be an assessment of the needs of that community.
      - What service do they need? Microsoft/excel?
        - Then based on that, provide some sort of training based on need.
        - After training, do post-test. Was it effective/not effective?
    - Comes down to structure of individual community and their need as well as organization, their assignment of a person to meet those needs
    - Going to have new internet users- training, cybersecurity workshops must be central to any navigator
    - We have to not necessarily think that this individual would be so responsible for the training but be able to collaborate with existing organizations. We have a lot of other resources we could tap into to provide support and trainings.
    - Reimbursement needs to be as close to real time as possible
- Additional Considerations
  - Cross training
  - Job placement
- Individuals Hired/Organizations Included

- o Working with trusted institutions in the community first
  - ▪ Local people we already know
- o Prioritize what kinds of organizations are serving in this role.
- o People who live in the communities served.
- o What is the percentage of BIPOC?
  - ▪ Low overall
    - • 2 out of 100 in one company represented
  - ▪ May depend on how large the company is – large companies recruit bilingual candidates. Small companies may not have capability to do that.
- • Security/Background Checks/Ethics
  - o All staff need background checks. Volunteer background checks to be considered- may not be necessary.
    - ▪ For example: In a library setting, not likely to have a volunteer at a computer.
    - ▪ Driver's license
    - ▪ Background checks should be a starting point.
      - • Do employees need to be fingerprinted?
    - ▪ Check all registries.
  - o Code of Ethics
    - ▪ Include code of ethics- baseline standard and then additions based on industry.
    - ▪ Organizations send what ethics code they'll be using, apprentices sign those.
    - ▪ Screening on the application side regarding ethics codes.
    - ▪ Adding interpreters, especially for telehealth.
      - • Additional code for these workers. Maybe what is used in the legal system.
    - ▪ Need form signed by digital navigators that they are acknowledging that they will adhere to a specific code of ethics.
  - o Location/Safe environment
    - ▪ Acknowledge that digital navigators represent many different identities.
    - ▪ Consider that various types of organizations from different sectors providing digital navigators so not all digital navigators come from the same kind of group
    - ▪ Before community activities- scope out activity, meet local people, make sure everyone is on the same agenda.
    - ▪ Build close relationships with local sheriff departments – share number of anticipated people
      - • Lots of coordination
    - ▪ Establish protocol for involvement of third parties

V. Action Items

Please contact Tom Allen (tallen@ors.sc.gov) or Cami Aull (caull@ors.sc.gov) with questions.