

Steering Committee Meeting Notes
Friday, May 2nd, 2014, 2014 10:00 am –
The Community Foundation of Mendocino County
204 S. Oak Street, Ukiah, CA 95482 (707) 468-9882

New Dial In Number

Dial In # (760) 569-7225, Participant Access Code: 108 1131#

1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: Dan Hamburg, Jim Moorehead, Brian Churm, John Kuhry, John Goldsmith, Matt Goff; Susanne Norgard, Trish Steel
- b. Guests: MCOE Superintendent candidates Kathy Wylie, Paul Joens-Poulton, Warren Galletti
- c. Call-in: Cathy Emerson, Mitch Drake
- d. Additions to the agenda: CE update; deletion of ASB

2. Cathy Emerson Update

- a. Cathy reported that yesterday the California Broadband Report was released by CPUC; the report was six months in the making and details adoption and penetration rates statewide.
- b. Here is the link to this report: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/NR/rdonlyres/0E08E45F-0DE2-447A-9BBB-A69496FF698C/0/CABroadbandReportUpdateasofJune2012FINAL.pdf>
- c. The report can be downloaded as a 21-page PDF (7,500 KB) and we strongly encourage you to read it.

3. Candidates for MCOE superintendent

- a. Current County Superintendent of Schools Paul Tichinin will be retiring soon, and all three candidates for the June 3rd primary election to replace him were in attendance at our meeting for questions and discussion around broadband topics.
- b. The Alliance prepared six broadband-related questions for the candidates, who were provided time to answer as in a regular candidate forum.
- c. The public was asked to hold their questions and comments until after all three candidates had time to respond to the six questions first.

4. Question 1: How do you plan to provide students with the home access they will need to comply with State Superintendent Tom Torlakson's digital learning goals of "any device, any time, anywhere"?

- a. **Kathy** replied that, "This is the heart of the matter."
- b. To fix the problem working with the Alliance would be key.
- c. For students without home access, providing after school access for homework, and creating access "hubs."

- d. **Paul** works closely with Paul Tichinin, who works closely with State Superintendent Torlakson, and being an advocate at the state level is critical.
 - e. Home broadband access has gone from being convenient to a necessity, and our students don't have that.
 - f. Until then, our libraries and schools are a "middle ground", and we need to expand the number of hubs we have in a region as we reach out.
 - g. Start locally, and then expand regionally and statewide, and be a voice for this challenge of being rural and remote.
 - h. **Warren** said he came here hoping to learn and would attend future meetings.
 - i. He feels it needs to be a community effort and suggested a county-wide task force, and the stronger the effort is here in Mendocino County, the more organizations and people involved, the more our voice will be heard at the state and regional level.
 - j. His push would be for reaching out to vendors, and building a strong county group that included supervisors and libraries.
5. **Q2 How would you work for implementation of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction Education Technology Task Force Recommendations (August 2012) #2 where *No child is left off-line: "Every student in California will have guaranteed on-campus and home Internet access" and "Develop and support a system of sharing infrastructure best practices across the state...providing students 24/7 network access is a top priority for the California K-12 infrastructure."***
- a. **Paul** said the first question touched on this already, and that Mendocino County is part of a five-county educational region that includes Del Norte, Humboldt, Sonoma, and Lake Counties.
 - b. He would work to lobby local resources and best practices, partnering to save resources we do have.
 - c. He said that there are opportunities to work through the MCOE office to work with the FCC and the bureaucracy that is around the E-rate program. Rural counties suffer disproportionately because they don't have the same capacity to deal with the phenomenal amount of paperwork; he would lobby for reducing the bureaucracy and restrictions that are currently on E-rate applications, and doubling the resources and some of those funds used for last mile.
 - d. **Warren** agreed with what Paul said, and said that building a local coalition first with everyone having the same vision, goals and pulling together and expanding regionally would give us more power at the state level.
 - e. He thought that schools right now are doing different things, and that pulling those schools in and getting everyone on the same page was important.
 - f. **Kathy** likes the idea of best practices, as from Humboldt County south we are all dealing with these same issues.
 - g. She would also chase grant money to subsidize student access at home, and work at the state level to reduce the E-rate bureaucracy (which provides a lot of funds) and make it more user-friendly.
 - h. She also feels that new technologies and ideas need to be explored, as there are already wireless receivers on all the power poles and everyone (almost) has power line access.

- i. Ideas that might seem crazy may become possible considering new technologies that are evolving; she gave the example of a buoy in the ocean beaming back a signal to our coast.
6. **Q3 The school districts have to rapidly upgrade to 1GbE and MCOE has to upgrade to 10GbE in order to adequately support the upcoming cloud testing technology. What criteria will you use to award those up-coming E-rate contracts? Would you be willing to add community access as an important factor in the selection criteria?**
- a. **Warren** said that he would work with all stake-holders and community members from within the districts to be on the same page and have the same vision, and we would have the task force that thoroughly researches this.
 - b. Student learning and making sure our students are served comes first, especially with the new assessments. And, we expand from there, and we always want to get the biggest bang for our buck as long as it's adequate service.
 - c. **Kathy** noted she doesn't use e-rate at her Three-Rivers Charter School and that she cut her connection bill in half using our local MCN Fusion service, which provides cheaper and better service than if using the standard E-rate. E-rate is "not the only game in town."
 - d. To the question of criteria, if all other criteria were met and in-line, then she would include community access and making sure low-income families were served and had access.
 - e. One of the key tenants of her campaign is to involve the public in the process of the education of the kids in our county, and that's key to the success of the County Office of Education.
 - f. **Paul** said that for awarding contracts, the process is clear and non-negotiable in how the County Office awards contracts.
 - g. For criteria in the contracts he would look at the reputation of vendor, and whether they have a track record, can they deliver and be held accountable if something didn't work, are they willing to put that in their contract; and cost.
 - h. The question we asked about community access as a criterion, Paul replied that yes, if allowed by the law. Sometimes there are restrictions and so he wouldn't apply it if it wasn't legal.
 - i. MCOE also provides a lot of guidance and support to the districts around the on-going E-rate tech plan.
7. **Q3 Are you aware of the work, mission, and experience of the Broadband Alliance and are you committed to breaking down "broadband silos"?**
- a. **Kathy** said that yes, she has been aware of the Alliance since the beginning, closely following what we have been doing, and would support ongoing interaction, and would hope to attend these meetings in the future as County Superintendent.
 - b. **Paul** was also familiar with the Alliance and our work, and noted that he really likes our model of inquiry which goes from asking the question to data collection to action as a simple yet effective strategy to stay on track.

- c. As far as breaking down the broadband silos: “The sooner the better”, as he only has satellite at his house. He told the eye-opening story of seeing the Comcast cable truck on his street and getting excited about getting service, only to be told from the guys that they were taking the cable down from the poles, rolling it up and taking the cable OUT, because the pole attachment fees were too expensive. He said it feels like, “I must live at the only place on the planet where we are going backwards”, and it’s disheartening.
 - d. **Warren** is also aware of the Alliance, and he did some research on our mission and wants to attend these meetings regularly, as he came here wanting to learn.
 - e. As for breaking down silos, “Yes, without a doubt, I am all for breaking down silos.”
 - f. Warren also has satellite at home, and says that when students come home and have slow or no internet, that they get very frustrated.
8. **Q5 Recently at Point Arena, AT&T lit up the schools but not the nearby county library; what are your ideas on how to work more closely with the Mendocino County Library to avoid such situations in the future?**
- a. **Paul:** libraries qualify for e-rate funding as well as schools, so making sure we are on the same page and helping with the process would be hugely important; it’s about serving the community and providing access for our students.
 - b. There is no reason to totally separate it; E-rate is based on free and reduced lunch counts, and we have high rates in the county; we should be receiving every benefit that we can get.
 - c. We can’t do it for them since they are their own entity, but the roles of the County Office and Superintendent are to do everything we can, and to communicate and support people through the process.
 - d. **Warren** agrees, and feels it’s an awareness issue...that you can’t include people if they are not aware of it. We all need to be on the same page and be aware of what we are doing, and ask would they like to get onboard. Libraries should be included...Point Arena library should have been aware of it and included and lit up, and they weren’t.
 - e. He thinks that creating a county task force is crucial in this effort.
 - f. **Kathy** would like to engage much more with the public... so for example having a YouTube channel where she produces a video which communicates what is happening at the County Office. Also newsletters, Skype meetings where people could come to a school hub, and face-to-face meetings. She would be pro-active about getting the word out about what is going on with all the different issues.
 - g. As a tenet of her campaign she also wants to engage the business community, because she thinks that they want to help but that we are not asking the right questions of them so that they can engage as partners. If communication was two-way and better, it can solve problems. She would focus on the communication piece that she feels is currently missing at the County Office. She is convinced that she can do a better job of engaging the business community and investment folks, and make sure that our kids are prepared to enter into the workforce when they leave high school.
9. **Q6 As the leader of MCOE, would you be open to working with the Alliance for input on your e-rate vendor selection process, or would you be willing to invite the Alliance for input on your AT&T (or subsequent E-rate provider) planning meetings? Would you be**

willing to designate a liaison to attend Alliance twice-monthly meetings and to keep an open flow of information between us?

- a. **Warren** said that without a doubt our input would be more than welcome, it would be valued. He would attend these meetings, and as a group we can gain knowledge and come up with a plan because no one has all the answers by themselves. He believes the Superintendent needs this Alliance as much as the Alliance needs the Superintendent.
- b. **Kathy** said “yes and yes”; she said that the Alliance are the experts in the county, so it would be foolish not to use our expertise going forward. With common core standards, professional development, students testing at all our school sites and other upcoming events, we need expertise in the room.
- c. **Paul** said that leveraging all our resources is critical, and that the county has representation with the Alliance with Richard Lamken and Steven Turner, and that he would continue that and would like to participate as well.
- d. Regarding the E-rate vendor selection process, Paul said that we can work together and have input on the criteria, but it’s a bit tricky when it goes to actually selecting the award...MCOE is a public agency and the County Office has to award the contract.

10. Comments:

- a. John Kuhry: Everyone said that they were all for breaking down the broadband silos, but what are specific things you see that would break down the silos in education?
- b. **Paul:** That’s a great question that goes back to that leveraging of resources...any one entity trying to do this is like pushing a boulder up a hill.
- c. We have a sense of urgency that is not really shared on the other side by the large corporations.
- d. I do think it’s about tapping state and federal resources both locally and regionally. It’s more than just broadband, but it’s about equity and access, and starts to move over to serving the equal rights of our students. That needs to be leveraged; You shouldn’t be discriminated against because you live rurally.
- e. **Warren:** the larger the group, and knowing what we want, the common message, one voice, one direction as we lobby would be much more powerful.
- f. **Kathy:** As far as specific actions I would take, the first thing that I would fix is at the County Office, in that we don’t have a Director of Technology. We have a Human Resources person in there, and it’s not his job function. We need to find that champion, put them in that seat and say “Go”. We have myriad issues around technology...just look at professional development for teachers, and kids completing degrees on line. Right now, a lot of our teachers are not versed on how to deliver that on-line experience. We need a lot of professional development to happen.
- g. All of that is key to the Director of Technology, and that position is non-existent right now so the first step for me is to get someone in that seat.
- h. John Kuhry made two points: We need to say that education doesn’t stop when a student leaves the school grounds, and being a champion of that voice for change; there’s a place for advocacy at the legislative level.
- i. The second point John made came up with the library discussion...if the public/Alliance had a better understanding of the plans and what is happening at the County Office, it

might not be that we can jump on the E-rate but there might be some synergy that could happen with other private-public partnerships. That's where he sees breaking down of the silos can be most effective.

- j. Brian said that one thing he sees in regard to the silo effect is that there is no access to school contracts by the public; we don't get the information...the technical people are almost under a gag order and the school boards who sign these contracts don't have the technical knowledge.
- k. A case in point was the Point Arena schools getting lit up...Brian builds broadband networks and said that MCOE must have known 18 months prior, and yet no one in the Alliance was told. He feels that it's not an oversight but an actual strategy that operates at MCOE. His question to the candidates was, "How will you break that?" People will sit in front of you and say, "Go with ATT", and ATT will say "Listen to us, we know what we are doing, we need to get this through." A lot of things will come at you to get things done...How will you fight such internal practices?
- l. Brian used the analogy of an organization required to provide ice cream – but there can be many flavors options they can choose, such chocolate, vanilla, or Neapolitan. ATT may only provide chocolate, but another vendor may provide the neapolitan.
- m. Brian provided the example of the Potter Valley E-rate contract to ATT which served the school and the ATT cell tower but not the community (...and I guarantee you the ATT cell tower was not in the E-rate application".) Another vendor bid on the project and planned to install a DSLAM in the central office which would serve the entire community in addition to serving the school, and it was rejected and ATT was chosen over it. Why? Brian said that although it is not stated, he feels that there is MCOE pressure to go with ATT. He asked the candidates again how they would deal with this scenario.
- n. **Warren** responded that he agrees, and that it is what has motivated him to run...a lack of communication in many areas, and not just over E-rate contracts. He feels the County Office needs to reach out and work together in many areas, including budget, professional development, transitioning to common core, and that we have to support each other and it all starts at the County Office.
- o. **Jim** said that what concerns him about the E-rate contracts is that it is supposed to be an open bidding process, but he can't get information about it. Brian said that he can't even find a list of the renewal dates for any contracts. Jim appreciated Paul's comments about MCOE having responsibility for awarding the contracts, but that he would hope that the new Superintendent would be able to accept Alliance expertise at whatever level the superintendent is willing to accept it.
- p. Jim does know that whichever vendor gets the contract collects 100% of their money.
- q. **Kathy** said she appreciates Brian's passion and wanted to say "Good for you." She agrees 100% that it has been a closed process but it is using taxpayers' dollars, and it should be a public process. This goes to her point about establishing a communication channel, which she feels is absent at the moment.
- r. She asked, "If we have contracts, why wouldn't we publicize them highly, get the most vendors to apply, see what's out there and get the best services for the site?"
- s. She would work to fix this situation by having a completely transparent process, and invite folks like the Broadband Alliance and other tech specialists, and get them all in the

same room or Skype meeting and discuss the issues openly and honestly so that we can get the best deal for our kids.

- t. Brian said that Mendocino County has some very creative people...they have had to be to survive, and they are putting together solutions. Kathy agreed using MCN as a unique example of a high quality service provider and that we should be tapping this sort of expertise. "If we aren't taking care of our kid's education, then our whole society as a whole is going to suffer. That's just obvious. So by taking care of our kids we are taking care of our communities."
- u. Brian provided another example of a situation up in Laytonville...the school is getting a fiber connection, yet it goes right by the Long Valley Health Center who is also looking to upgrade their connection, and who can tap into other sources of funding.
- v. Kathy said that ATT was stringing fiber near her house, and she called MCN about getting access to that fiber, but the cost was going to be \$900/month.
- w. Jim agreed that these are all silos that need breaking down.
- x. **Paul** said that he won't disagree with the importance of open bidding and transparency; although he is not overly familiar with that side of the contracting issue. He also agrees with Kathy about the need for a Director of Technology, and they are looking at re-designing it, whatever it take to get someone working, bridging that gap and moving forward. He said it's been a frustration for him personally because he can see what is happening from the classroom side and the limitations.
- y. He also agreed that we have a lot of people in this county who are great problem solvers, and that we have to think outside the box and use expertise.
- z. Supervisor Hamburg commented on his extreme frustration and what he feels is "back alley" politics by ATT...he first heard about ATT "lighting up the coast" at an RCC meeting in Fortuna from an ATT engineer, but it wasn't the coast at all it was only the schools. He felt personally ripped off ...ATT hadn't informed anyone...they scheduled a Planning Commission meeting on Christmas eve...he had to stop city council members on the street and ask what was going on. And now he is hearing that they could have received a "head's up" much earlier from MCOE. He would hope that MCOE would stand up to ATT and say, "No, you are not going to treat our communities this way." He feels it's a travesty that they lit up the Point Arena High School and didn't light up the Coast Community Library, and that for AT&T it's only about Return on Investment (ROI) and that they don't care about the community.
- aa. Brian clarified that it's ROI *plus* their strategic initiative to move everyone to wireless. They want you off the copper and onto a metered wireless plan.
- bb. Kathy wondered why the CPUC is not on this and regulating broadband like a utility.
- cc. Unfortunately, "that horse left the barn" in 1996 with the federal Telecom Act (Brian).
- dd. Jim said that since everyone has said that they want to learn more about broadband, here's another piece of the puzzle. The Alliance realized years ago that ROI is the driving principle for these companies, and the CASF fund subsidizes the building of broadband in these rural areas. Last week five of us were in Red Bluff (Jim, Dan, Trish, Paul Tichinin, Randy MacDonald) as part of a group that met with CPUC commissioner Sandoval and her staff to find solutions. Jim was disappointed in the meeting, but presented Commissioner Sandoval with a challenge...based on the subsidies sent to Mendocino to

- date from the CASF program (5 grants worth \$460,000 to connect 1,950 homes in the county), then it will take 37 years to close the digital divide in Mendocino at this rate.
- ee. Kathy said that this is why we have to look at new technologies to help solve the problem...
 - ff. Brian agreed, but added that base infrastructure will last for year, and that means conduit and fiber. We need to create Interim solutions so that people can get some access as we solve this problem...right now he doesn't see those types of solutions happening, but these type of discussions with the vendors have to happen. You have to work with them, get creative, know where you can push them and know where you can't.
 - gg. Kathy asked a question back to the Alliance...so the first thing would be to have transparency in the contract and bidding process, but what else would you do if you could "wave that wand and make things happen?"
 - hh. Brian responded that each community has different problems and access, so you have to that get inventory, then seek out groups like the Alliance and find local expertise, and to sit down at the table with them. If we have enough lead time of what is coming down the road, then we can key it up. That's the piece of key information...if we knew 18 months ahead of time (how long it takes from start to finish on these projects), we could have keyed up libraries and businesses, and then sat down with ATT and provided them with prospects for other opportunities in a friendly discussion. But without notification it doesn't happen. We have an inventory of Anchor Institutions and know that most of them have broadband needs.
 - ii. Kathy asked if we have a map of the schools, hospitals, and libraries in the county. Jim replied that we have a Broadband Access Inventory that is in a spreadsheet.
 - jj. When Kathy was Planning Commissioner in Butte County, she looked at traffic flows and patterns a lot, and found a map with pins to be very helpful...a visual. She suggested that maybe we can chase some grant money to produce this sort of visual to take to our stakeholders, and we could visually see what is lit up and what is not.
 - kk. Trish appreciated the increase in communication with MCOE recently with Richard attending our meetings, and that she would like to see that continue to grow and increase.
 - ll. Brian agreed, saying that we want to be kept informed. Common core hit the wall this month and we are wondering how the network is doing. Paul said that he thinks people are pleasantly surprised overall, and there were some little glitches so people were glad that it was a field test but overall it was a good experience.
 - mm. Brian's next question was whether there was something that this group could be helpful with on issues like that, and to please share that sort of information with us. The Alliance has representation in Sacramento probably once a month, and with our extended contacts (Sonoma County) we are also a lobbying group, so we would like MCOE to please utilize us.
 - nn. Kathy thanked the Alliance for being pro-active in our county, and said that she is also on a couple of list serves. If we wanted to be on those list-serves she would share that information with us.

oo. Jim provided "Equal Access for All Californians" t-shirts to the candidates, and thanked them for taking the time to attend. Trish said she would add all three candidate email addresses to our email distribution list.

11. Meeting ended 11:45

Next meeting: May 16th, 30th