

**Steering Committee Meeting Notes**

Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 10:00 am – 11:30 am

*The Community Foundation of Mendocino County*

204 S. Oak Street, Ukiah, CA 95482 (707) 468-9882

**Dial in at (605) 477-2100 Participant access code: 565491#**

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then the regular number, then #, and then access code and # again)

1. **Call to Order: 10:00 am**
  - a. Attendees: Brian Churm, Carole Brodsky, Dan Hamburg, Greg Jirak, Jim Moorehead, John Goldsmith, John Kuhry, Mike Nicholls, Steve Turner, Susanne Norgard, Trish Steel
  - b. Call-in: None
  - c. Guests: Mindy Kittay (Mendocino County Library Director), Scott Adams (Comcast Director of Government Affairs, North Bay)
2. **Golden Bear Broadband RMMI project update**
  - a. The Sonoma/Mendocino permitting kick-off meeting is scheduled for March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1:30 pm at the Community Foundation office in Ukiah.
3. **MCOE/Alliance/MCOG planning grant – “Bridging the Digital Divide in Mendocino County”**
  - a. The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) endorsed the grant application at their March 4<sup>th</sup> Board meeting by a unanimous vote of seven in favor/none opposed.
  - b. MCOG staff will work with MCOE finalizing the application, and the formal application is due Tuesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Caltrans office in Eureka.
  - c. If the grant is successful, one of the project “deliverables” is to hold community educational forums to cover topics such as: the opportunities for economic and educational growth provided by universal broadband access, how to gain access, and how to measure service quality. These meetings would be held in six areas throughout our county: Ukiah, Round Valley, North Coast, South Coast, Anderson Valley, and Laytonville/Leggett/Willits. We could use the help of The Community Foundation to advertise these meetings.
  - d. The goal of the grant is to leverage capital to develop access in small areas, and find ways for people to make the connection to expand their opportunities.
  - e. Jim noted that the output of the data collection from the grant survey would go into the CPUC mapping database. As an outcome of the recent meetings in Sacramento and the need to fix the incorrect maps, a CPUC broadband mapping working group was announced, and Greg Jirak was appointed to be in that group (more in 5e below).
  - f. This grant should appeal to Caltrans, as access to broadband can be considered a “virtual mode” of transportation that reduces the impacts on the road (wear and tear, carbon releases, accidents, etc.).
  - g. Our plan would be to put all the survey results on our new website, encouraging businesses and anchor institutions to input their data also. Eventually data input to the CPUC database will also include an Android application for mobile devices so people can

make submissions of data directly. There are existing applications that map available Wi-Fi, although only for personal use, not to send to any database.

- h. One problem with the data going directly to the CPUC database is that the user does not get any feedback after submittal. It would be nice if there were a way to get some quick feedback of results, which will encourage more widespread use of the app.

#### **4. CPUC/CETF/CASF Conference – March 12, 13, 14 – Mike and Jim**

- a. Mike and Jim attended the California Advanced Services Fund Annual Regional Consortia Learning Summit which was held on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup> in Sacramento. Scott Adams (meeting guest today) also reported that he attended.
- b. Mike put together a four-page report about the various meetings held during the summit. [Mike's report is attached to this email.](#)
- c. Highlights for Mike included: A roundtable consortium discussion with some really fine examples of collaborative work that is being done.
- d. Jim speaking on behalf of the Alliance during the public comment period of the California Broadband Council Meeting held at the state capital and chaired by CPUC president Michael Peavy. Jim made three points (these are not in Mike's notes): 1) Deployment is still an issue, as the incumbents have declined to expand service 2) The current CPUC maps overstate the served areas of broadband significantly, and 3) the Route One Corridor Project is a key component of the Golden Bear Broadband application, and it needs to be approved. The incumbents are not willing to do the work, nor work with the Alliance, and with the challenges to the Golden Bear application we are "Damned if we do and damned if we don't!"
- e. The challenge to the Golden Bear application by Comcast (and four other incumbent providers) brought up a separate discussion with Scott Adams of Comcast who was here to present about the Comcast Internet Essentials (IE) program. Brian Churm, Technology Chair for the Alliance stated that he didn't understand Comcast's position challenging the Golden Bear application, and he would think that Comcast would support a middle mile project (an important distinction) because it would provide Comcast with more vendors from which to buy capacity from. Brian stated that Comcast complains that AT&T is "strangling us on these routes" so an alternative to AT&T makes sense, and the Golden Bear is not competing with Comcast for TV, so he doesn't understand why they are opposing it.
- f. Scott stated that he knew he wouldn't just be talking about the IE program when he read about the Comcast challenge to Golden Bear, and he had a chance to ask their regulatory person about it as this is not his area of expertise. He was told by that person that the Golden Bear was such a huge project and that significant portions of the fiber ring went through and over Comcast footprint areas, and that the project didn't fit the definition of what the CASF grants are about. Scott also stated that Comcast is committed to being involved in the process and he was at the initial upstate broadband consortium and that although their participation has not been as much as we may have wanted they are committed to being part of the conversation and solution.

**(Back to the CASF summit...)**

- g. Jim and Mike had an interesting hour-long meeting with Jacqueline Kinney, the Technology Principal Consultant for Senator Alex Padilla. Jacqueline stated that the Golden Bear does not meet the state funding guidelines and approval would be problematic, but Jim and Mike stated their case, including the scope of the project and the need, and asked Senator Padilla to carefully review the Golden Bear proposal to understand the need to fund at a different level than other broadband projects under consideration.
- h. Jim and Mike also agreed to lobby for Senate Bill 740, which would add \$25 million to the CASF fund annually for the next four years; Sonoma and Mendocino County representatives have already or soon will be contacted regarding support for this bill.
- i. The Alliance has committed to assist in a State broadband mapping working group that will be opening soon for local input to assist in broadband mapping. Greg Jirak, Strategic Planning Chair of the Alliance, was appointed to be in this group.
- j. They met with Robert Tse of the rural USDA and heard about how John Deere developed their own network with their tractors connected to it for robotic controlled tractors, reducing paper and costs. They agreed to organize a meeting in the near future to discuss ways that Sonoma and Mendocino County can work with the USDA/Rural Development.
- k. Jim spoke ten minutes with Sunne McPeak of California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) about the MCOG application. Sunne was very excited about it, and Jim sent her the original proposal that was approved by the MCOG board. Hopefully this connection will lead to some support for the application as it progresses with Caltrans.

## 5. Comcast Internet Essentials – Scott Adams

- a. Scott Adams travelled to be at our meeting and to make a presentation about Comcast's Internet Essentials (IE) program. He provided handouts about the program to all in attendance.  
Website is: <http://www.internetessentials.com/>  
Phone: 1-855-8-Internet (1-855-846-8376)
- b. Scott encourages people to go to the website, as there is a lot of information, video tutorials in both English and Spanish, partners who are working with them, and key links found there. Materials about the program can also be ordered from the website (all material is bilingual).
- c. The program is about one and a half years old, and was the result of Comcast negotiations with the Federal Government over the pending Comcast acquisition of NBC Universal and the need to address the growing digital divide.
- d. At incomes below \$40,000, only about 50% of the families in the US have internet connectivity, the barriers being: 1) cost of service 2) cost of equipment such as computers, and 3) lack of education about the relevance of the Internet and/or fears regarding the Internet and their children.
- e. Comcast agreed to offer service to eligible low income-families by providing internet service (3 Mbps down) for \$9.95/month, 75% off the normal rate of \$40-\$60/month.
- f. So far, IE has connected more than 150,000 household to the internet in over 39 states, with 15,000 computers sold to IE families.

- g. Eligibility requirements: Families must reside in the Comcast service area, and have at least one child eligible for school free or reduced lunch (can be in public, parochial, homeschooled or charter), they are not current Comcast customers, nor have any overdue Comcast bills.
- h. Participants receive a voucher to purchase a student netbook for \$150, which will soon expand to include a desk computer or laptop computer. Scott will get us more information when it is official.
- i. Scott talked about how the program has evolved to meet the needs of families and expanding eligibility, and trying to get the “no Comcast service for 90 days” requirement overturned.
- j. Jim brought up the huge problem for our county in that most of our households are outside of the Comcast footprint. The primary work of the Alliance is trying to reach those residences outside the footprints of companies like Comcast.
- k. Scott acknowledged this issue, but also stated that for people within the Comcast areas such as Willits, Fort Bragg, and Ukiah, Comcast is making progress to bridge the digital divide. He has met with MCOE Superintendent Paul Tichinin, and last year gave a presentation to all the Ukiah school principals. He also had two handouts of their End of Year Progress Reports for 2012 for the Fort Bragg Unified School District and the Ukiah USD, which summarized participation in the program.
- l. From these handouts: Fort Bragg had 39 activations out of an estimated 355 eligible households, for an activation rate of 11%. Ukiah had 114 activations out of an estimated 1,180 eligible households, for an activation rate of 9.7%. These are actually higher than the average of all the other schools in California, where the average activation rate is 5.7% of eligible households.
- m. Scott said that they want to partner, and are developing extensive partnerships, including working with 50 school districts in his territory. Good things have resulted from these partnerships, including the Comcast funding of a \$5,000 digital literacy grant to the Boys & Girls Club in Ukiah.
- n. Jim commented that he was impressed to see that Comcast has been modifying the program as they gain experience with it, and we will continue to discuss ways that we can work together to help spread the word about the program.

## **6. Community Foundation Challenge Grant**

- a. Our goal has been achieved, and now we need to publicize it; Susanne will work with Carole on this.

## **7. Mendocino County Libraries – Mindy Kittay**

- a. Mindy is the new Mendocino County Librarian and has been in her job for about three months. She joined us to discuss the role of Internet access in libraries as she sees our libraries changing and evolving. She is currently working on a draft operating plan for 2013 and presented just a few of the highlights from that draft.
- b. Mission (draft): to enrich the lives of the people of Mendocino County by providing free and equitable access to high-quality public education for all ages. This mission statement is directly tied to access to Internet, as more and more collections are in down-loadable formats.

- c. One strategy for their “Research Assistance & Instruction” curriculum is to create virtual branches. Virtual branches are completely online and accessible to people in the whole county with tools users can take advantage of where and when it is most convenient for them, with everything that a library does available.
- d. Their draft plan includes six strategic priorities, including high-speed public Internet access with no unnecessary restrictions and fees.
- e. Another priority would be to satisfy curiosity by providing resources for lifelong education and exploration of topics of personal interest.
- f. A specific strategy for their goal of self-directed education would be to bring high speed internet to all the branches and the bookmobile. She said that we could literally use 100x the access that we currently have, and it would be affordable because of the E-rate program. The problem is that the libraries don’t have the technology to access the internet (computers, tablets, etc.).
- g. Part of their “next steps” would be to assure that the digital divide is eliminated by supporting broadband initiatives, especially those that bring fiber to our libraries and communities and also includes having sufficient equipment to easily support staff work, public broadband access, training of staff and patrons, and to establish the library as an open information hub for the surrounding communities.
- h. Mindy stated that Mendocino County has some big challenges: We have five branches and a bookmobile, and if we were rated against libraries nationwide, we’d be in the lower 10%. And if we had library standards (CA doesn’t) we would be woefully low in all areas.
- i. Edge initiatives are written and designed for libraries to measure where they are technology wise, and how to build community support and budget. Mindy will be depending on those initiatives, with their online resources to help her.
- j. There was a discussion of the E-rate contracts (July 2014 before any changes can be made) and possibilities for getting community access. Brian brought up the idea of having “value-added” packages to proposals for E-rate considerations.
- k. There was also a discussion of public access computers, and how Mindy came up with a clever way to get public funding for the E-rate computers without filtering content/censorship, and that was to have standards of behavior in the library (against viewing pornography for example) to prevent such activities rather than having censorship at the computer.
- l. Mindy has been doing E-rate for eleven years, stating that it’s complicated and convoluted. With her job, she has a big IT project and no IT personnel, so she is happy to take all the help she can get. Scott said that he would check in with Comcast to see if there is any assistance they could provide, as they work with school districts on erate. However, Mindy stated that she can’t take any help from anyone who is bidding on an E-rate contract.
- m. Steve Turner will introduce Mindy to Paul Tichinin, as they have not met yet.

**8. Meeting Adjourned at 11:40 am**

**Next meeting: March 29<sup>th</sup>, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>**