



WSU EXTENSION
Okanogan County

**Meeting Minutes
OKANOGAN COUNTY & CCT
BROADBAND ACTION TEAM MEETING
August 24, 2023
2-3 pm**

Meeting started: 2:06 PM

Introductions: Attendees by Zoom/call in:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach (OK CO Economic Alliance), John McDonald (PUD), James Lightfoot (ACRS), Jeff Rasmussen (COM), Brandi Schwerdtfeger (ACRS), Hanna Kliegman, Chris St. Germaine (Ziply Fiber), Jenny Rojanasthien (NCW Tech Alliance), Cory Johnson (OK CO Community Services), David Grooms (US Electrodynamics, Inc), Summer Hess (NCW Tech Alliance), Jason Hetterle (WVC), Stafford Strong (Charter Communications), Nick Pappin (WSU), Margo Amelong.

July Meeting minutes approved.

Jeff Rasmussen (COM) Update- Submitted 230-page BEAD five-year plan which is posted on the WSBO website. Looking for feedback from the community through October 15th. Attending many meetings regarding Digital Equity and hope to have the draft published after the first of September with a 45-day public comment period. The Digital Equity plan will also be uploaded to their website.

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/building-infrastructure/washington-statewide-broadband-act/internet-for-all-wa/>

NCW Tech Alliance Presentation- Jenny Rojanasthien (Executive Director) and Summer Hess presented on behalf of Digital Equity & Access Coalition. NCW Tech Alliance is a 501 that focuses on technology, entrepreneurship and STEM education. Since 2015, they have been working on expanding events, programs and resources. This came out of a digital equity initiative launched by the community health network of Washington when they received a previous digital equity and digital navigation grant from the Department of Commerce. The main focus of NCW Tech Alliance is to review high speed internet access in our rural areas or regions by working with counties on their Digital Equity Plans and creating BATS. The group is offering 8 free Digital Navigator trainings for September, each will be around 3-4 hours. They are also doing NCW Tech Help Pop-Ups. To join the coalition, you simply show up to a meeting, which will be quarterly. The first coalition call is on September 28th from 3-4 pm via zoom. Here is the sign up link for the Digital Access and Equity Coalition call in September:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_blr1mtsBS3WIYW_t8cuD_g#/registration

Check out their website regarding resources, dates and times for their latest trainings:

www.ncwtech.org/techhelp

Roni Holder-Diefenbach (OK CO Economic Alliance) Update- Digital Equity in-person training in Omak on September 6th from 3-7 pm and September 7th from 9:30 am to 1:30 PM at the Family Health Centers.

This is open to organizations and community members who provide services. Kayla Wells-Yoakum and Roni will be presenting CCT Ok Co BAT information on how we engage community members and organizations in Wenatchee at the North Central Washington Virtual Care Conference on September 18th and 19th. Kayla and other WSU Extension offices are working together to create a presentation on why BATS are important in leveraging resources and looking towards infrastructure in the community at the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) annual meeting that will be held in November.

Roni looked at the different funding Okanogan County and the CCT have received since our BAT started. CCT received \$40M through the NTIA grant for the reservation and parts of Okanogan County. OCEC received the WSBO funding of \$12.9M that covered upper Methow Valley. Ziply Fiber received \$3.9M through NTIA funding for Brewster, Tonasket, Loomis and Danville, and now Ok Co PUD for \$30+ M.

Roni asked the providers if they have identified projects for BEAD funding, so we can be ready to apply as requests for funding come out.

Next Monday Economic Alliance press release is going out for their 2024 public infrastructure projects for the county. Roni explained the Economic Alliance prioritization study and how it effects Okanogan County. The study will also be on their website and via social media. <https://economic-alliance.com/>

John McDonald (PUD) Update- Okanogan County PUD were awarded \$30.195 M grant through the USDA to build fiber optic infrastructure in the northeastern part of the county, one of the most rural areas. Service to 721 homes. Waiting for formal documents and security agreement from USDA and then will begin the environmental phase. Once USDA gives environmental approval they will release the funds, this could take 12 to 18 months, once the funds are released, they have 5 years to complete the project. ACRS offered their services for detailed engineering and the environmental parts.

Chris St. Germaine (Ziply Fiber) Update- Negotiating with Tonasket and Curlew for the cost of traffic control plans, project should be completed by September 30.

Joanna Bastian (MethowNet) Update- Reaching out to the last few MethowNet residents to see if they would like to have internet.

Stafford Strong (Charter Communications)- Charter would like to have more of a presence in Okanogan County and are looking at grant funding opportunities. Would like to be a player in our BAT in a meaningful way by bringing resources to the table.

Nick Pappin (WSU) Update- Nothing new to report. Starting to work with communities and putting together a very long-term digital equity plan.

Meeting ended at 2:53 pm. Next meeting is September 22 @ 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Kellie Conn, Ok Co WSU Extension.