Meeting Minutes
OKANOGAN COUNTY & CCT
BROADBAND ACTION TEAM MEETING
September 28, 2023
2-3 pm

Meeting started: 2:06 PM

Introductions: Attendees by Zoom/call in:
Roni Holder-Diefenbach (Economic Alliance), Kayla Wells-Yoakum (WSU Ok Co Ext.), Kellie Conn (WSU Ok Co Ext.), James Lightfoot (ARCS), Summer Hess (NCW Tech Alliance), Nathan Weis (Inland Cellular), Patrick Law (Twispworks), Rachel McClure (Dan Newhouse Office), Hanna Kliegman (Community Member), Greg Mendonca (OCEC), Mike Maltais (Quad City Herald), Joanna Sebastian (MethowNet), Alica Cruz (NCW Libraries), Nick Pappin (WSU Extension), Stafford Strong (Charter Communications), Lisa Romine (CEO SkillSource), Juan Martinez (Worksource Omak), Nathan Debar (Economic Alliance).

August Meeting minutes approved.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Update- Regional conversation with NCW Tech Alliance will occur after our BAT meeting and will be discussing Digital Equity. All Ok Co CCT BAT Members encouraged to remain on the zoom and participate in the meeting.

Funding Updates-
- Greg Mendonca (OCEC) is working with WSBO to create a contract for their awarded funding from May, should be completed soon, will start construction in 2024.
- Joanna Sebastian (MethowNet) is working on distributing door-to-door hangers to encourage new subscriptions, 1800 have signed up, 2600 homes will be served.
- Chris Sebastian (Ziply)- Loomis construction on hold due to design change and clearance from NTIA. Moving forward with site visits from WSBO. Gound breaking ceremony on October 5th at Brewster City Hall at 12 PM, lunch will be provided. Will also have other groundbreaking ceremonies in each area. Ok Co CCT BAT Members are encouraged to attend.
- PUD- No update on community connect application.

Additional Updates-

- Kayla Wells-Yoakum- Roni and Kayla were invited to deliver a presentation at the NCW Virtual Care Conference last week. They spoke on how to utilize an existing BAT for community engagement to help in the development of a Digital Equity plan. Our BAT story was shared with 14 attendees.

- Roni has been invited to be on a panel to speak at the Washington Workforce Association Conference in November. Roni will be talking about how broadband impacts workforce development.

- Roni and Nathan Debar attended an Associate Development Organization (ADO) meeting, a fireside chat in which the main topic was Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and how that can assist in building broadband and business. Our BAT is gaining notoriety for the work we have done, we are being asked to speak at meetings that deal with broadband and digital equity. Roni asked members to volunteer and speak at engagements, Greg Mendonca volunteered to present at future meetings we are invited to.

  We will not be meeting in November and December; our next BAT meeting is October 26 at 2:00 pm.

- Moving forward, we completed the Digital Equity portion of our Broadband action plan and will partner with NW Tech Alliance. They visited our area at the beginning of this month and held several different digital navigation trainings, so that organizations throughout our community are trained in being able to work with community members and teaching them how to access the Internet and utilize the services that are available.

- Our BAT will stay a part of the regional committee (NCW Digital Equity Coalition) and participate in the quarterly meetings, which will take place after our BAT meeting. The region consists of Chelan, Douglas and Okanogan counties. A Digital Equity guide has been created and printed for our area, Roni has many cases, she would like everyone to pick guides up to distribute to the community.

- Patrick Law (Twispworks)- Attended Digital Navigator training in Moses Lake. Educators and social service people attended because they provide business support services, such as starting or growing businesses. Digital Navigation increases the ability to reach a broader range of people who would like these skills. TwispWorks also deals with artists who wish to market their items and lack digital skills to do so. Patrick felt the training was helpful, he plans to attend chamber meetings, and send out newsletters to inform the community.

- Nathan Debar (Economic Alliance) – Also attended the Digital Navigator training. The training opened his eyes to the struggle community members are experiencing with technology. He feels offering these services to the community will be positive.

- Lisa Romaine (Worksource)- Sent 5 employees to the training.

- Joanna Bastian (Methownet) received an email from Methow at Home, who provides support to seniors. They offer some tech support to members; they sent a volunteer to the training.

- Greg Mendonca (OCEC) and Methownet received messages from the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), $75 per month for areas that are hard to reach. Would like to learn more and asked our members if anyone has information on this program. Joanna Bastian replied that the ACP is $30 at the present time and is reviewing to see if that amount can be increased. Providers or participants like Methownet would have to sign up for the program and prove that there is a financial hardship in the area, or that the minimum greater than the $30.

- Nick Pappin (WSU Extension) built an ACP tracking tool. You can check it out www.broadband.use.edu, select Tools and click on ACP Dashboard and Okanogan County. The Initial Proposal, Volume 1, should be out in a couple weeks.

- Rachel McClure (Governor Newhouse Office) receiving phone calls from veterans having trouble navigating VA online, hoping digital navigation training will assist this group. Fears that when the BEAD dollars roll out that the state may not look at those areas, Rachel sent Roni contact information for the vets.

- Tech Hub who promotes innovation for technology-based companies will be presenting at our October meeting.

Meeting ended at 2:53 pm. Next meeting is October 26 @ 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Kellie Conn, Ok Co WSU Extension.