



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 622-2224
www.ct.gov/ctedtech

Infrastructure Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

August 2, 2022

Attendees

- Joe Campbell — Connecticut Technical High Schools
- Doug Casey — Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology
- George Claffey — Central Connecticut State University
- Tom Dillon — Independent
- Kerri Kearney — Manchester Public Schools
- Ryan Kocsondy — Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
- Michael Mundrane — University of Connecticut
- Sabina Sitaru — Pratt & Whitney
- Rick Widlansky — Libraries Online (LiOn)
- Rob Wilson — Somers Public Schools

Agenda

- Community Wireless Program Design and Timing
- Commission Resolution
- Federal Digital Equity Funding
- Digital Government Summit

Welcome

Tom Dillon, Chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, opened the meeting with a welcome and thanks to members for their time and thoughtful guidance on the agenda topics shared in advance.

Community Wireless Program Requirements

Tom began by sharing progress to date in the Community Wireless initiative. The CEN team has deployed more than 170 access points at community anchors across the state, connecting hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents. The initiative has also brought about the widest deployment of the Eduroam authentication platform (www.eduroam.us) in the state, providing K – 12 and college students and faculty the ability to log into trusted wireless networks at thousands of locations across Connecticut.

The approved State budget provides for \$10M to expand the reach of the Community Wireless program through a new model in which applicants would request funding,



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 622-2224
www.ct.gov/ctedtech

rather than have CEN handle installation and other fulfillment duties. Tom reminded the Advisory Council members of past requirements for the program shared in the [April 25 meeting minutes](#). In parallel, Ryan Kocsondy has addressed the requisite federal funding requirements for the Community Wireless and three other initiatives, including overall network upgrades, library connections, and charter school connections, also funded through federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). He expects funding approval for all four initiatives by the end of 2022 or early 2023.

The group discussed what criteria applicants should address when describing the potential impact of receiving funds for providing wireless access in their communities. Michael Mundrane suggested several ways of gauging benefits and impact. First, he acknowledged that the number of residents served should factor into applications and scoring, but in a normalized fashion, perhaps as a percentage of residents in a particular community. Normalization would help address the need to support rural as well as densely populated urban communities. George Claffey encouraged the inclusion of qualitative benefit and sustainability as criteria in any application. For example, he would want to see how wireless access would benefit residents through digital literacy training at libraries and community centers.

Michael suggested that applications highlight the context of the proposed offering in light of other connectivity options. If the proposed plan represented the only way residents could connect, it would receive a higher score than one for a community where a number of broadband options are available. Michael encouraged applications that spoke to coordinated efforts across partners. A partnership among a local library, senior center, school district, and housing authority, for example, would benefit education, support the needs of the aging, support career advancement, and enable civic engagement by broadening access to online resources. Finally, the application might state that such impact models are illustrative, and that reviewers would welcome other ways of demonstrating impact from applicants.

Tom questioned whether the group had provided enough input to begin designing the application. Ryan felt that was the case, and that he would soon complete the final proposal to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, working through the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM). George Claffey asked the group to consider an initial letter of interest that the Commission and CEN could issue. Responses to such a letter, an informal next step prior to issuing a program application, would help gauge overall demand, likely applicants, and how they would use the awarded funds. Review of letters could help identify potential efficiencies and encourage feedback to local partners to work together to submit coordinated rather than standalone applications. As an aside, Doug shared that the eventual application will likely reside in a common platform, still to be determined, which multiple agencies will use to administer a host of state and federal grant programs. Doing so will help provide a uniform user experience for applicants and help streamline assessment and reporting across programs.



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 622-2224
www.ct.gov/ctedtech

Tom thanked the Council members for their input, He Ryan, and Doug agreed to begin application design work for the Community Wireless program, as well as a potential call for letters of interest, following the necessary flings with the Treasury via OPM.

Commission Resolution

Doug provided some context to the next topic, reminding Advisory members that the Commission had sponsored a community survey asking for suggestions on what uses of technology during the pandemic should continue. The volume of responses was relatively small, with specific suggestions limited to continuing basic practices such as allowing for virtual parent-teacher conferences and continued use of Google Classroom for assigning and collecting homework (see [June 2021 report](#)). The Commission and its Advisory Councils felt strongly that the Commission should underscore the value of continuing to use digital tools and pedagogies to support learning. Those sentiments led to a [final resolution](#) adopted at the Commission's June 6, 2022 meeting. Doug welcomed feedback on the resolution and any next steps that Advisory Council members would recommend.

As Vice Chair of the Commission, Michael echoed the call for input. He framed remote learning during COVID as something of an experiment that highlighted gaps in access to devices, broadband, and the skills to use them effectively for teaching and learning. The resolution speaks to those gaps, and the Commission welcomes ideas on how to close them, especially in soliciting partnerships with and action on behalf of stakeholders outside the community of education technology advocates. The group briefly addressed the need for awareness and potential legislative changes from members of the Connecticut General Assembly. Tom also suggested that superintendents and school directors of technology should speak to the needs articulated in the resolution and likely ways to close opportunity gaps. Doug closed the topic by welcoming feedback that Advisory Council members could provide through a shared document. Ideas collected from the meeting and that document would help guide next steps that the Commission would consider at its September 2022 meeting.

Federal Digital Equity Funding

Doug provided Advisory Council members with an update on the federal Digital Equity program that the Commission will lead on behalf of the state. He offered a brief overview of this program, part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) with oversight through the US Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA, broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/digital-equity-programs). The program includes formula-based awards to participating states for planning as well as capacity building. The Commission submitted Connecticut's application in early July to receive funding for the planning phase, with an expected funding award in September.



55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 622-2224
www.ct.gov/ctedtech

The planning award will support development of the State's digital equity plan over the course of the next year. Efforts will include outreach to and collection of input from communities across Connecticut, with a specific focus on identifying the needs of "covered populations" such as those at lower income levels, residents with disabilities or those experiencing homelessness, and households with school-aged children, among others. The planning phase will include support for research into gaps that exist around broadband availability, affordability, and adoption as well as the development of skills to use technology effectively for learning, career advancement, and civic engagement. Based on these inputs, the Commission will develop and execute a statewide digital equity plan to run from 2023 through 2028. He underscored the close coordination of digital equity efforts with the buildout of broadband to residents, funded through the complementary [Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment](#) (BEAD) and [Middle Mile](#) programs.

Tom thanked Doug for the overview and appreciated the significant investment by the federal government into defining and addressing barriers to technology adoption in Connecticut.

Digital Government Summit

Doug welcomed all Advisory Council members to attend the free Department of Administrative Services Digital Government Summit on September 8. Now in its sixth year, the event addresses the interests of public-sector technology professionals in serving residents in the digital age. The summit will include an overview of the forthcoming "MyCT," a personalized site designed to meet the needs of individual residents. Other sessions will address data privacy, cloud computing, and cybersecurity. Registration for the event remains open at events.govtech.com/Connecticut-Digital-Government-Summit.html.

Adjournment

Before concluding the meeting, Tom asked members if they had any questions or topics to share. Ryan mentioned the forthcoming ARPA-funded programs to connect towns and libraries as well as to upgrade CEN. He promised to provide updates on these initiatives and might tap Advisory Council members on the design of these programs.

Tom thanked Ryan and the other members for their time and engagement, adjourning the meeting at approximately 12:20 PM.