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Infrastructure Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

April 25, 2022

Attendees

- Colleen Bailie — West Haven Public Library
- Joe Campbell — Connecticut Technical High Schools
- Doug Casey — Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology
- Burt Cohen — Office of Consumer Counsel
- Tom Dillon — Independent
- Karen Fildes — New Fairfield Public Schools
- Kerri Kearney — Manchester Public Schools
- Ryan Kocsondy — Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
- Michael Mundrane — University of Connecticut
- Sabina Sitaru — Independent
- Paul Tarsa — CEN
- Rob Wilson — Somers Public Schools
- Rick Widlansky — Libraries Online (LiOn)

Agenda

- Community Wireless Program Requirements
- Other Updates
 - Commission Ed Tech Recommendations
 - State Digital Inclusion Program
 - Digital Equity Toolkit
 - CEN Conference

Welcome

Tom Dillon, Chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, welcomed members at approximately 1:00 PM and provided a brief overview of the agenda items, starting with input on the Community Wireless program expansion.

Community Wireless Program Requirements

Tom opened the discussion by noting the progress made during the February 1 Advisory Council meeting to define the forthcoming Community Wireless program expansion. As the [minutes of that meeting](#) reflect, members discussed and weighed in on several key areas of the program:



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- Scope: Allowable expenses, such as access points, connections via CEN to the proposed locations, labor, and outreach (e.g., on-site signage and promotion). The program should *not* fund expenses such as a refresh of internal wiring.
- Detailed Budget and Timeline: A template for applicants to list all costs and timing. Funds awarded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) must be awarded and spent by 2026.
- Technical Specifications: Without choosing specific brands or models, the minimum capabilities of access points and other technical components of the proposed buildout.
- Partnerships: What community partners the organization will enlist to support the planning, buildout, and promotion of wireless access.
- In-Kind Contributions: Any local investments to expand the program impact.
- Sustainability: How the applicant will ensure that access will continue after the program ends.
- Outreach: Which organizations the Commission and CEN should tap to raise awareness of the program's availability, as well as how to do so (e.g., broadcast and social media, etc.).
- Impact and Reporting: The measures each applicant agrees to collect, via local or centralized reporting tools.

Members of the Advisory Council continued defining the program, addressing the following concerns:

- Funding Limits: The group discussed whether the program should impose a cap on awards, given that a few applicants' requests could consume a significant amount of the program funds. Tom also raised the question of whether a minimum should exist, given that extremely small investments may not support the program's intent effectively. Michael Mundrane suggested that the program concentrate less on dollar amounts and more on the potential impact of each proposal and the need it addresses.
- Impact: Ryan Kocsondy recommended that applicants define both the likely benefit of the investment as well as the sources of data (e.g., the U.S. Census' [American Community Survey](#)) used to justify those estimates. Closely tied to the concept of impact is value, as Michael highlighted. How efficiently a proposal would use funding to generate a given impact translates into value to the community served as well as to the State for its investment of ARPA dollars.
- Aggregate Measurement: To ensure that CEN can collect and report on usage data, applicants will need to allow for the collection of aggregate connectivity data. The CEN team is exploring a solution that will allow for this type of data collection without compromising the privacy of individual users.
- Partnerships: The group had encouraged partnership applications, though Michael framed these types of proposals as defining the "how" versus the "what," that is, the proposed impact. Cross-organizational proposals — such as



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those that include schools, municipalities, libraries, and community-based organizations — should speak to efficiencies and impact, especially in addressing components such as eduroam integration.

- **Compliance:** Joe Campbell, who serves as the state's e-Rate coordinator, raised the issue of assessing actual buildout completion and other compliance matters. In his role, he often visits schools to help ensure that federal awards result in completed circuit buildouts and other allowable expenses. The program should include similar activities as part of its administrative costs. Doug Casey suggested that program administrators create a standard closeout template to provide details about technology installations and impact.
- **Means of Access:** Currently the Community Wireless access points provide two service set identifiers (SSIDs) for end users to get online. Residents can do so via the "CT Public WiFi" as well as "eduroam" SSIDs. The group discussed continuing to offer both SSIDs and ensure that grant recipients will commit to providing both even after the program's completion. Another option the group discussed is authentication using a common identity provider such as Google, LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter. Colleen Bailie indicated that libraries are generally averse to requiring logins via these platforms and asked if patrons could log in using their library cards. Ryan did not see how this could take place statewide and reiterated the "multi-tenant" aspect of the program, that is, that local libraries could provide additional means of logging in and that the "CT Public WiFi" route would always be available.

Other Updates

Following the discussion concerning the Community Wireless program, Tom asked Doug to cover several updates concerning other matters of interest to the Advisory Council members.

- **Commission Resolution:** Doug directed members to review the [draft resolution](#) that the Commission considered at its March 7 meeting. He explained that the recommendations in that resolution came out of discussions from the Digital Learning Advisory Council as a means of driving a broader educational technology agenda within the state. The Commission will revisit an updated version of the resolution at its June 6, 2022 meeting, and Infrastructure Advisory Council members may suggest changes in the meantime.
- **Digital Inclusion:** Through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Connecticut is eligible for a Digital Equity planning grant (<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/digital-equity-programs>). Doug shared that the Commission will lead this work and will depend on Advisory Council members and their constituent groups for input on program planning and design. He promised to share additional details about the program following the release of a federal Notice of Funding Opportunity, expected by mid-June.



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- Digital Equity Toolkit: During the Infrastructure Advisory Council's February 1 meeting, members recommended that the Commission not mandate the collection of digital equity and access data at the local school level but encourage best practices in this area. For example, school leaders can leverage activity logs for educational applications to identify those students who may need help getting online at home. Doug will include these and other recommendations in a forthcoming, updated release of the Commission's [Digital Equity Toolkit](#).
- CEN Conference: The annual CEN Conference takes place Thursday, May 5. Doug encouraged Advisory Council members to register if they have not done so already. The event features outstanding keynote speakers, dozens of breakout sessions on a variety of educational technology topics, and plenty of time to reconnect with colleagues following two years of remote (online) events.

Adjournment

Tom concluded the meeting by thanking members for their engagement and suggestions, which greatly inform the Commission and CEN's work and programming. He adjourned the meeting shortly after 2:30 PM.