

WNY Digital Inclusion and Equity Coalition Meeting Notes

2021-06-16

Present:

- Alex Carducci, Real Estate Financial Analyst, City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning
- Kier Dirlam, Director, Allegany County Office of Planning
- Jim Finn, Administrative Vice President, M&T Bank
- Justin Foster, Website and Communications Manager, Healthy Community Alliance
- Elizabeth Freas, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Support and WNYRIC Services, Erie1 BOCES
- Jesse Friedman, Fellow, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- David Godfrey, Legislator, Niagara County Legislature
- Kimberly Herrington, Founder, Western New York WiFi Warriors
- Erica Kreutzer, Population Health Manager, Value Network
- Daniel Ljiljanich, Superintendent, Niagara-Orleans School Board Association; Niagara Wheatfield Central School District
- Don Matteson, Chief Program Officer, Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation
- Sam Mattle, Executive Director, Center for Self-Advocacy
- Alan Meyers, Fatherhood Connection Facilitator, Cattaraugus Community Action
- Tanvier Peart, Just Recovery Coordinator, Partnership for the Public Good
- Katie Pieri, Executive Director, WNY Nonprofit Support Group
- Michael Prutsman, Executive Director, Council on Addiction Recovery Services
- Teresa Quattrin, Senior Associate Dean for Research Integration, University at Buffalo
- Curtis Robbins, Director of Strategy, Research, and Evaluation, John R. Oishei Foundation
- Michelle Roberts, Executive Director, Buffalo Bills Foundation
- Andy Strohmeier, Integrating Special Populations Coordinator, Clinical and Translational Research Center, University at Buffalo
- Heidi Ziemer, Outreach & Digital Services Coordinator, Western New York Library Resources Council

[Article on judge ruling that NYS cannot compel internet providers to offer \\$15/month broadband plans.](#)

Moving Forward Together Grant Request Update

- We're nearing closure on a fiscal sponsorship arrangement. The fiscal sponsor will be responsible for managing the finances, but Don (eventually the Coalition Coordinator) will be responsible for day-to-day work and narrative reporting.
- Don is hesitant to move forward on anything requiring use of grant funds until the agreements are fully executed and funds become available.

Committee Updates

- Don continues to work on scheduling standing committees' first meetings so that they can self-define their charters, roles, responsibilities; identify their representative to the Steering Committee; and start setting out bodies of work. The Digital Equity Dashboard ad-hoc committee is currently his top priority, since data will be the lifeblood of demonstrating the Coalition's value and securing future support and funding.
- Digital Equity Dashboard Ad-Hoc Committee
 - Don continues to have difficulty getting this workgroup meeting on the calendar. This is a high priority workgroup because future funding requests and arguments in favor of continuing digital inclusion and equity work will hinge on having data to support them.
- Policy, Advocacy, and Funding committee update:
 - This committee has not met since its initial meeting last month. Lots of information continues to pour in about policy and funding opportunities; it will take some time to sort through all of that and begin sharing it out to the Coalition.
 - The broadband advocacy letter is ready to go. It will be going out at the end of June, possibly in early July, depending on when signatories are locked down.
 - The letter has been revised to include a requested minimum standard for broadband of 100 Mbps down/100 Mbps up.
 - Don will be sending around an invitation to sign onto the letter. Signatories can sign on as individuals (still listing job title and organization affiliation), or on behalf of their organizations. Naturally, people can opt not to sign onto the letter at all.
 - The letter will be going to all state and federal officials serving Western New York.

Meeting Frequency Check-In

- This is the third meeting of this second quarter. When we moved from bi-weekly to monthly, we planned to revisit this meeting tempo at the end of each quarter.
- Don feels like we've lost a little bit of momentum.
- The general sense is that monthly meetings are appropriate to the pace of work. If the volume/pace of work increases, we can look at increasing meeting frequency.
- At Kim's suggestion, we'll keep full-coalition meetings to monthly, and try scheduling all committee and workgroup meetings for Wednesdays at 9am. It might take a few weeks to get everyone into the groove, but a consistent meeting time will probably work better for everyone.

Communications Platform

- We have been trying to use Microsoft Teams as a communications platform for the Coalition. We have 52 invitations to Microsoft Teams, with eight people who have actually logged into the system. This doesn't seem to be meeting our needs.
- Further, Teams as a platform impedes transparency, which seems like it should be a central goal for a community-driven coalition.

- Don is inclined to build a website for the coalition using domain names that he'd purchased back when the Coalition was formed.
- Kim suggested a wiki-style platform, akin to what the Gravity Project uses for its work. It's accessible, extensible, and depending on the wiki service used, inexpensive.

Membership List Refresh

- Don has been adding lots of people to the calendar invitation as people express any interest at all. There are quite a few people who are on the invitation that haven't yet attended a meeting, and might not be interested any longer.
- Don will be sending around an email at some point asking people to opt-in to make sure people aren't getting spammed with Coalition information that they don't want.

Digital Inclusion and Equity Initiatives Directory

- Curtis reminded everyone about the directory and provided a brief demonstration of the data entry form in Airtable and how the information can be displayed.
- Please enter information about any projects or programs you're aware of. Partial information is okay!
- The data entry form is available at: <http://wnydigitalequity.link/form>
- The directory's contents can be viewed here: <http://wnydigitalequity.link/directory>
- Airtable is fairly mobile-friendly, so it should be easy to enter or retrieve information from the directory on any device.

WNY Library Resources Council Presentation

- Heidi Ziemer, Digital Outreach Coordinator
- WNY Library Resources Council is a six-county, multi-library organization. It supports public, academic, hospital, and specialty libraries.
- Has been involved in many digital equity initiatives since the Census, as they realized that libraries could play a significant role in gaining internet access, both broadband access and training.
- Access to health information online is another important role that hospital libraries were beginning to play. WNYLRC decided to expand this role to include a broader range of libraries, which could provide greater support to their communities. They obtained a 2019 grant from NNLM to get a group of 15 academic, school, and public librarians certified as Consumer Health Information Specialists. WNYLRC also secured a grant for these librarians to offer health information programming at their libraries. The COVID-19 pandemic began at the tail end of this grant.
- Recognized importance of telehealth and online health information. Applied for an Institute of Museum and Library Services COVID Cares grant, but the Council's board funded two pilot projects: one in Buffalo, one in Jamestown. These are currently underway, and similar to projects being run in the state of Delaware.
- Developed a ["libguide" — an information guide to help people find information on specific topics — relating to the Emergency Broadband Benefit \(EBB\)](#). It also provides broader information about digital equity and tools for digital inclusion. It's had more

than 1,700 views in 70 days. The Oishei Foundation is funding translation work to make the libguide's information more widely available to non-native English Speakers.

- Working with Mission: Ignite, STEM Alliance, CTNY to draft a meta-coalition letter ensuring that state and local governments are aware that digital inclusion/equity coalitions are already in the communities and ready to do the work, including shovel-ready projects.

For Next Meeting

- Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, July 21, 2021 at 9:00am.
- Dean Bellack will be sharing an update on the Orleans County Digital Literacy Initiative's work.