

WNY Digital Equity Coalition Steering Committee Meeting

2024-04-10

Attendance

Present

- Steve Heist; VP, Information Technology & CIO; OneBridge Benefits
- Sheila Kalkbrenner; Digital Literacy and Wellness Coordinator; Ardent Solutions
- Don Matteson; Chief Program Officer; Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation
- Sam Mattle; Executive Director; Center for Self Advocacy
- Bob Spino; Director of Technology; Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES

Financial Review

- Don updates the financial spreadsheet based on reimbursements and payments, essentially on a cash basis.
- The latest entry was \$1,640 for operational expenses incurred between May 2023 and early March 2024, which Don absorbed until submitting for reimbursement.
- Don has receipts and backup for all expenses and can provide details on what the money was used for.

Strategic Casemaking Training

- The Case Made training had a significant overage due to pricing changes, which was absorbed by substantial funds in the Moving Forward Together grant.
- Don negotiated the quote down but it was still a little over budget. He suspects they may have been double billed for part of it, which could result in a \$10,000 refund if true.

Moving Forward Together Grant Funds

- The budget being discussed was outlined to the Moving Forward Together Committee when the grant was awarded in 2022, which technically ended in June 2023.
- The Assessment and Evaluation budget line is a flat amount intended for the entire grant, but no one has been contracted for that work yet.
- Don spoke with the Program Officer at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo about budget revisions and was told they have flexibility to move lines around, except for keeping the regranteeing dollars as a minimum.
- Some grant dollars had to be diverted to cover ConnectALL-related expenses in 2023, which consumed the latter half of the grant's timeframe.

Regranting

- Steve also asked about the logistics of distributing the regranteeing funds and the criteria for approving projects.
- The ability to regrant the \$70,000 is contingent on funding projects with a systems change orientation, not just sprinkling it across digital literacy programs.
- They had done regranteeing with their first Moving Forward Together grant and had a process that worked reasonably well.
- Steve and Christine have been discussing getting the city of Buffalo to allocate ARPA funding to provide internet access in community centers that are considered city buildings. It's unclear if

this qualifies as a systems change, as it's one-time build funding rather than operational expenses, and sustainability is a concern.

- Don shared the Water of Systems Change model, which could be used to create criteria for funding projects.
- Doing something new without long-term funding might fall short of systems change, while policy, practice, and resource flow changes are more durable but harder to evaluate.

NYS Digital Equity Network Convening

- Steve asked about getting together with other coalitions in New York State to coordinate efforts and discuss goals for the year.
- Don believes there is an appetite for convening with other digital inclusion and digital equity coalitions, which happens virtually every month, but it's an open question whether to use grant dollars for it.
- The group discusses whether to connect with other regional digital equity coalitions to understand their priorities and focus areas.
- The group agrees it would be valuable to reach out to other committees and see what they're working on, even if their priorities differ based on regional needs.
- There may be some commonalities and initiatives they can all support, even if not fully aligned.
- ConnectALL has been resistant to holding regular meetings with coalition steering committees, despite requests. They're happy to reach out when they need something from the coalitions but less receptive to hearing what the coalitions need from them.
- The group seems to have an appetite for using some of the budget to support a statewide convening, ideally after May to avoid summer vacations and September school/class conflicts.
- Don will float the idea with others in the network and they can negotiate timing together rather than deciding unilaterally.
- The group needs to scope out the details and budget for a potential in-person meetup, which Steve feels would be more effective than virtual.
- Even if priorities differ, they could share ideas and learn from what has worked well or not in different regions.

Next Steps

- Don will initiate conversations with the New York State Digital Equity Network
- Don will follow up on the potential \$10,000 double billing for The Case Made training.