

WNY Digital Equity Coalition Steering Committee Meeting

2024-07-10

Attendance

Present

- Christine Carr-Barmasse; Executive Director; Mission:Ignite
- Steve Heist; VP, Information Technology & CIO; OneBridge Benefits
- Don Matteson; Chief Program Officer; Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation
- Sam Mattle; Executive Director; Center for Self Advocacy
- Jeff Sanderson; Vice President – Strategic Initiatives; People Inc.
- Bob Spino; Director of Technology; Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES

Financials

- Don was not able to obtain a June profit and loss or balance sheet in time for this meeting. He updated the running worksheet based on the May documents and other known expenses. He'll reconcile once he has the June documents and update accordingly.
- Don reviewed the Coalition's finances, which consist mainly of the 2022 Moving Forward Together Grant.
- The grant has a balance of a bit over \$125,000 once we account for the \$1,380 of additional reimbursement that Don submitted for convening expenses. Of these remaining dollars, \$70,000 is earmarked for systems-change-oriented project regranteeing.
- Once we pull out the \$70,000 for regranteeing, we have about \$55,000 to work with.
- We continue to draw down the Schmidt Futures grant to pay for Community Coalition Member stipends.
- Additional dollars will be drawn down from the convening line as we put funds into the statewide convening in August. It's not earmarked in the budget, but we expect to put \$5,000-7,000 towards the event.

Statewide Convening

- Christine provided an update on planning for the statewide convening, scheduled for August 13 in Syracuse.
- The venue will be the Syracuse Central Library, and the event will run from 9:00am to 3:00pm.
- The budget is still a bit in flux, but they're working to keep it within the \$5,000 that we'd initially committed to providing.
- Each coalition is limited in the number of people it can send, probably three or four people. This is primarily to contain costs. Some coalitions might be sending fewer or no representatives, so there might be room to squeeze in a few more people.
- Don suggested that WNY might be able to send a couple of extra representatives since we are picking up the tab for the event.

Marconi Society Digital Inclusion Training Opportunity

- Don was contacted by someone from the [Marconi Society](#) to see if WNYDEC would be interested in purchasing licenses for their online digital inclusion training course. It's an introduction to the field for new practitioners.
- The training consists of more than 50 videos spread over five modules. Lectures/interviews are from reputable people (e.g., NDIA, ILSR, former FCC Commissioners) and cover an introduction to digital inclusion, network technology basics, evaluating digital inclusion community resources, digital inclusion policy foundations, and impacts/applications.

- Don has previewed a dozen videos and feels that they are of high quality and provide a good grounding for practitioners new to the field or who have deep focus in one area but not a lot of general familiarity.
- Don asked whether this was something that we wanted to make available to Coalition members. The list price for the training is roughly \$1,000 per person, though the Marconi Society has extended a 50% discount to the Coalition. We could use some of the \$12,000 budgeted for projects to purchase ten or twelve licenses.
- The Steering Committee is interested, but would prefer to preview some of the content first-hand. Don will approach the Marconi Society to see whether they can offer some other preview materials without furnishing full licenses. He will also see whether 10-12 licenses is sufficient to retain the 50% discount.
- There was some discussion about having participants front some nominal amount of money (say, \$50) to help with follow-through, which could be returned upon completion of the course.
- This led to a broader discussion of what the Coalition's educational strategy should be. There seems to be a need for several levels of education – the Coalition's Steering Committee, the Coalition's general membership, and the broader community.

Project Planning for the 2024-2025 Season

- There was a brief discussion of a few projects that we need to be thinking about for the next 12-18 months.
- Legislative season for 2024 is over, but it won't be long before we're ready to head into the 2025 legislative season. We need to get ahead of this for next year to plan some trips to Albany.
- We also need to re-engage with the Strategic Casemaking content that we worked on in 2023. We need to build the case for digital equity in Western New York, especially as we consider future funding applications from NYS and the federal government.
- We need to stand up work groups for both projects.

ConnectALL Digital Equity Technical Assistance Grant Application

- Don has generated a first draft of an application to the ConnectALL Office for a Digital Equity Technical Assistance grant.
- These grants are oriented towards preparing organizations and coalitions to apply for future funding. They are capacity-building grants, with no provision for direct services. The maximum award is \$100,000.
- Mission:Ignite will need to submit the request on the Coalition's behalf, as they'll be our fiscal sponsor.
- There was some discussion about the need for a single coordinating entity statewide, much like what we see in Utah (Utah Education Telehealth Network), Ohio, or Florida. There is general agreement that this is an important need, which ConnectALL views itself as playing to some degree. This falls outside the scope of the Digital Equity Technical Assistance Fund, but is worth looking at for future funding opportunities, especially if we can develop a statewide application.
- Don reviewed the application as he's drafted it to date. It consists of three primary components:
 - Data Capacity Consulting:
 - Developing community-level indicators for goals that don't already have population measures: digital literacy, privacy/cybersecurity, and accessible government services.

- Developing a small number of program-level measures for each goal (broadband access, equipment access, digital literacy, privacy/cybersecurity, and accessible government services) to complement the information programs are already gathering. This will provide a common metric across programs.
- Centralized Data Platform: Licensing and configuring a centralized data platform that can aggregate common measures from across providers. This will include developing interfaces between existing systems to streamline data exchange where possible, and developing simplified export mechanisms for programs using software without application program interfaces (APIs). This will let us visualize both community-level and program-level progress for each goal.
- Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Training: RBA is a framework for moving from goals to action in a quick, but disciplined, way. This component of the request has three elements:
 - General RBA 101: Conduct a Coalition-wide training on RBA basics. This is a high-level overview to help orient Coalition members to the organizing framework for our work.
 - RBA Professional Certification: In addition to one existing RBA Certified Professional, the Coalition would like to have two more Coalition members receive in-depth training on RBA. This will help develop capacity to facilitate RBA discussions and organize the Coalition's efforts.
 - RBA Train-the-Trainer: Ultimately, we would like to have three individuals certified as RBA trainers. Having both RBA Certified Professionals and Trainers within the Coalition will help ensure continuity and consistency in our work over time.
- Christine's team at Mission:Ignite has suggestions for the draft and has offered to assist with the proposal. Don asked Christine to have her team send over revisions and suggestions so he can incorporate them. Otherwise, he will be meeting with Mission:Ignite next Wednesday (July 17) to work out application logistics and determine what information they need to submit separately.