

WNY Digital Equity Coalition Steering Committee Meeting

2024-06-12

Attendance

Present

- Christine Carr-Barmasse; Executive Director; Mission:Ignite
- Don Matteson; Chief Program Officer; Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation
- Jeff Sanderson; Vice President of Affiliations; People Inc.
- Heidi Ziemer; Outreach & Digital Equity Coordinator; Western New York Library Resources Council

Excused

- Steve Heist; VP, Information Technology & CIO; OneBridge Benefits
- Bob Spino; Director of Technology; Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES

Absent

- Sam Mattle; Executive Director; Center for Self Advocacy

Announcements

- Don noted that Sheila Kalkbrenner had to step away from the Steering Committee owing to a need to concentrate more on her current program responsibilities.

Financials

- 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 \$126,000, of which \$70,000 is earmarked for systems-change-oriented project regranting.
- The true balance is actually a shade over \$125,000 since Don still has about \$1,380 in expenses to submit for reimbursement between convening swag and two months of Mail Chimp subscription.
- Once we pull out the \$70,000 for regranting, we have about \$55,000 to work with.
- Don noted that costs for the 2024 convening were comparable to those for the 2022 convening, being about \$300 higher this time around.

Advocacy Update

- Last time the Steering Committee met, it was two days before a vote was scheduled in the US Senate to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration. Attached to that bill was an amendment that included \$6 billion to fund a continuation of the Affordable Connectivity Program.
- Don built a ResistBot petition to share with the Coalition to encourage Senators Schumer and Gillibrand to vote to support this legislation with the included amendment. The ACP funding ultimately was not approved.
- Despite this, Don believes this was a useful proof-of-concept for the Coalition's ability to mobilize action on short notice. A total of 23 signatures were added, resulting in emails sent to both Senators.
- Don has built a walk-through on how to sign a ResistBot petition, and is working on one for creating a petition for others to sign.

- The Coalition's website has advocacy asks (as well as links to more general ResistBot petitions) on its, "How You Can Help" page.

Convening Debriefing

- Don noted that there were 19 attendees (20 including him).
- The convening had three main goals: building relationships/fostering trust; care and feeding for the coalition (working on a mission statement); starting to develop a Coalition response to the State Digital Equity Plan.
 - Don felt the convening made good progress on the first two goals, but not as much on the third.
 - He also noted that this assessment might be a bit premature, because he hasn't had an opportunity to review and post-process all of the notes from the day.
- To this last point, the New York State ConnectALL Office has released a Digital Equity Technical Assistance request for applications, designed to help nonprofits and tribal entities build their capacity to advance the State Digital Equity Plan's goals and to pursue additional funding to support their work.
 - There is a total of \$1.4 million available, with grants of up to \$100,000.
 - ConnectALL is having information sessions on June 24 and 27.
- There was some discussion about specific projects or plans that could help advance ConnectALL's goals.

New York State Digital Equity Network Convening

- There's a state-wide digital inclusion/digital equity coalition convening scheduled for August 13 in Syracuse.
- The venue's tentatively set for the library.
- The WNY Digital Equity Coalition is providing funding in the ballpark of \$5,000 to start.
- The intended attendee list is in flux, and is currently estimated at around 40-70 people. There's some discussion of including politicians, regulators, and funders, which could cause that list to balloon.

Next WNYDEC Full-Member Meeting

- Don noted that the ConnectALL Office will be joining the next full-member meeting on June 26. They have several questions they'd like to discuss with the entire coalition. These include:
 - How do you feel about the WNYDEC's capacity? What more is needed for you to consider its capacity to be "healthy?"
 - Where do you feel like you need the most operational support? (e.g., Programming, professional development, evaluation)
 - Considering broadband availability/affordability, device access/support, digital literacy, privacy/cybersecurity, and access to government services:
 - With which of these does your organization have the most experience?
 - What projects are you currently involved with that touch on these areas?
 - With which of the following populations have you worked to address digital equity concerns?
 - Aging Individuals
 - Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
 - Individuals Living with Disabilities
 - Individuals with Language Barriers
 - Low-Income Households

- Racial and Ethnic Minorities
- Rural Inhabitants
- Veterans