

WNY Digital Equity Coalition Steering Committee Meeting

June 12, 2025

Attendance

- Steve Heist (OneBridge Benefits)
- Don Matteson (Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation)
- Al Meyers
- Simone Ragland
- Bob Spino

Survey Consultant Selection

Southpaw Insights (Downstate Consultant) - Eliminated

- The committee ruled out Southpaw due to concerns about their proposed 400-person sample size, which many members felt was insufficient
- Additional concerns were raised about not having a local presence in Western New York
- Budget constraints would not allow them to increase the sample size within the \$60,000 contract amount
- Despite Don's initial bias in their favor due to strong pre-submission engagement, the committee felt they were not the right fit for this project

Avant Research Group vs. Clementine Gold - Final Decision Pending

- **Avant Research Group:** Technically strongest but felt "detached," "corporate," and "clinical" during interviews
- **Clementine Gold:** Demonstrated passion and authenticity, acknowledged their oversight regarding MWBE paperwork without making excuses
- Committee appreciated Clementine's transparency and felt they would treat the Coalition as an important client rather than just another project
- Concerns were raised about potential bias in Clementine's methodology due to their community-based response rate strategies
- Don will send a follow-up question to Clementine Gold about addressing potential bias in their methodology
- The committee agreed that unless Clementine provides a significantly poor response, they will likely be selected

Digital Equity Technical Assistance Grant Update

Grant Status - Now Active

- The technical assistance grant is officially unstuck after Don, Steve, and Christine had a productive conversation with the ConnectALL office
- Several misunderstandings were cleared up, particularly regarding the MWBE (Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise) component
- The agreement with Clear Impact has been signed and the project is officially underway

Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Training

- The Coalition secured a "buy one, get one" deal on RBA training
- Four people will now be trained instead of the originally planned two, for the same budget
- Don is confirming with all previously interested parties their continued interest in participating in the training

State Reimbursement Challenges

- Nazeer from ConnectALL is aware that state reimbursements are slow
- Minimum expected wait time is 60 days after submission for reimbursement

July 28th Coalition Convening Planning

Venue and Logistics

- **Location:** Erie 1 BOCES Education Campus on Harlem Road, West Seneca
- **Catering:** Bob previously sent a menu to Don for catering options; Don will work on arranging food and refreshments for the day

Agenda Structure

- **Morning Session:** Coalition building focused on developing organizational values to complement existing mission and vision statements
- **Afternoon Session:** Emphasis on collaboration between Coalition member organizations, especially given the current tight funding environment
 - The goal is to leverage human capital, organizational resources, and collaborative opportunities rather than focusing on funding limitations

Pre-Work Requirements

- The July newsletter will focus exclusively on convening preparation
- Main pre-work will be a personal values reflection exercise for all attendees
- This personal reflection will inform the collaborative development of Coalition values during the morning session

Current Registration and Outreach

- Seven people have registered after the initial email announcement

- The convening will be featured in the next day's newsletter
- Simone will also post the information on her website
- Registration is open to all, not limited to organization representatives

Support and Logistics

- **Swag:** Existing inventory includes notebooks, fidget spinner cables, and 40-50 battery packs from previous events; branded pens may be purchased
- **Staffing:** Simone offered to help with facilitation and computer-based tasks
- **Setup:** Most logistics support will be needed on the day of the event

Upcoming Meetings

- **Next Full Member Meeting:** Wednesday, June 19th
- **Survey Consultant Decision:** Expected by Tuesday of the following week after receiving Clementine Gold's response to the bias question