

Digital Access for All Idahoans: Community Coalition Call

Thursday, February 16, 2023
11 a.m. MT / 10 a.m. PT on Zoom

Coalition Call Leaders/Facilitators:

- Deana Brown, Library Learning Consultant, Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL)
- Chelsea Summerlin, Digital Inclusion Consultant, ICfL

Coalition Call Presenters:

- Stephanie Bailey-White, State Librarian, ICfL
- Dylan Baker, Deputy State Librarian, ICfL
- Matthew May, Research Scholar, Boise State University's Idaho Policy Institute

Meeting Recorder: Allison Maier, Management Assistant, ICfL

Meeting Notes

Brown introduced the purpose of the quarterly community coalition calls: The ICfL is the lead agency working to create the [Digital Access for All Idahoans Plan](#) (DAAI Plan). These calls are an opportunity for the ICfL to share progress on that plan and for participants to engage in the process.

Brown outlined the agenda for this first coalition call:

- Digital Inclusion 101
- Introduction on the DAAI planning process with the ICfL
- Deeper dive on plan development with BSU's Idaho Policy Institute
- Q&A and ongoing chat

Bailey-White provided an overview of digital inclusion and the ICfL's involvement in this work:

- The ICfL is excited to be part of the DAAI planning process and to involve as many partners as possible to help bridge the digital divide in Idaho.
- The ICfL is a state agency that was formed in 1901 with a mission to build the capacity of libraries to best serve their communities. The way those services are delivered has changed, but the mission remains the same. The ICfL has been working on digital inclusion efforts for several decades.
- The ICfL is working closely with the Idaho Department of Commerce and the Idaho Broadband Advisory Board. There are several funding streams coming into the state, and most of those are focused on the infrastructure side of broadband – providing internet and fiber service to as many Idaho households and businesses as possible. Meanwhile, the ICfL is focused on the non-infrastructure barriers that may prevent Idahoans from accessing the internet.
- The state has an [Idaho Broadband Strategic Plan](#). As part of that plan, the [Idaho Broadband Advisory Board](#) will engage in partnerships with state agencies. The state will have separate technical plans to assist with grant awards coming through and provide measurable strategies and goals.

Baker provided further information on what it means to focus on the non-infrastructure barriers to digital inclusion:

- Even if fast, reliable internet was available to every house and business across Idaho, there may still be barriers that prevent people from getting online. That’s what the DAAI Plan will aim to address.
- The [National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#) (NDIA) identifies five elements of digital inclusion:
 - Affordable, robust broadband internet service
 - One resource that is already in place to address this is the national [Affordable Connectivity Program](#). Many Idahoans are eligible to get a discount for their internet services and devices.
 - Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user
 - This means devices that are appropriate for the task – for example, access to a computer or tablet rather than just a phone for writing papers, interviewing for a job, etc.
 - Access to digital skills training
 - For example, information about navigating email, Zoom, etc.
 - Also known as “digital literacy.”
 - Quality technical support
 - Accessible apps and online content
 - Education, entertainment, health care, government services, private services, etc.
- Participants may also hear mention of the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA), which is where the federal funding going to states for this planning is coming from.

Bailey-White noted that cybersecurity and internet privacy are elements of digital skills training that will need to be included in the five-year plan. She provided additional details about the DAAI Plan and process:

- Each state is working on a broadband infrastructure plan and a digital equity plan.
- Idaho has received \$564,700 for its planning process.
- Once the DAAI Plan is approved on the state and federal level, several million dollars will be available each year to implement the plan’s measurable outcomes over the next five years.
- Even though the planning funds are a small percentage of the overall funding that will be available for infrastructure, they still represent a historic amount of funding to address the digital divide in Idaho.
- Planning funds will be used for three major activities:
 - Community and partner engagement
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Report development and distribution
- The ICfL is contracting with [BSU’s Idaho Policy Institute](#) to accomplish these activities. The institute will be conducting telephone surveys in both English and Spanish and hosting focus groups to gather information from covered populations so the plan can be as inclusive as possible.

- Each state is required to make sure these covered populations are included in their digital access plan:
 - Low-income households
 - Aging individuals
 - Incarcerated and recently incarcerated individuals
 - Veterans
 - Individuals with disabilities
 - Individuals with a language barrier
 - Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
 - Individuals with low literacy levels
 - Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area
- 76% of Idahoans fall into at least one of these covered populations.
- Idaho's DAAI steering committee is made up of individuals who represent at least one of these covered populations.

Baker highlighted the required elements of the DAAI plan:

- A vision statement
- A needs assessment
- An asset inventory of existing digital inclusion resources, program plans, and strategies
- A coordination and outreach strategy
 - Including activities like these statewide coalition calls
- A description of how existing local digital equity plans will be incorporated into the state digital equity plan
- A holistic implementation strategy with measurable objectives, measures for ensuring sustainability and effectiveness, and mechanisms for ongoing evaluation
- An explanation of how the implementation strategy addresses existing state, local, and private digital equity efforts for covered populations
- A description of how the state will accomplish the implementation strategy by engaging and partnering with other organizations
- A timeline for implementation of the plan
- An outline of how the state will coordinate its DEA, BEAD, and other federal or private digital equity funding

Bailey-White provided an overview of the DAAI planning process timeline:

- The federal funding came into Idaho on November 15, 2022, starting a one-year shot clock. The DAAI Plan will be due in November 2023.
- The goal is to have the plan done earlier than that because a draft needs to be included in the infrastructure plan the Idaho Department of Commerce is taking the lead on. The timeline for that is even shorter, with a June deadline.
- The ICfL and BSU's Idaho Policy Institute plan to have a draft of the DAAI Plan together by July/August 2023. It will be available for a 30-day public comment period.
- Between now and then, there will be outreach activities such as coalition calls, steering committee meetings, and focus groups. The ICfL will also be compiling information on regional,

county, and tribal plans. Partners will be able to review this information to help ensure nothing is missing.

- Funding is available for DAAI exhibits and presentations at organizations and conferences.

First round of questions from community coalition call participants:

- Will cities and counties really be driving the implementation of the digital access plan?
- Answer from Bailey-White: There will be components for cities and counties to implement – they know their people and needs the best. But there are also many counties in the state that are so sparsely populated they may not have the staff or resources to help with digital skill development or a device pipeline. There may need to be one-stop shops at the state level or other resources that provide an alternative for individuals in remote areas.
- I'm interested in what's happening and then thinking about how it applies to my institution/population (a university).
- Response from Brown: Pell Grant recipients are immediately qualified to receive internet and device discounts through the Affordable Connectivity Program. And there are other ways college students can qualify for the program. Resources are available at <https://getacp.org/esh>, and it would be great to make more students aware.
- Washington State is employing Extension to do some of the BAT work — their worksheets/packets are great. I know it's early stages and you might not have an answer, but I wonder how/if Stephanie, Dylan, and Amber (UI Extension) have connected?
- Response from Bailey-White: The ICfL is meeting with the University of Idaho Extension Office weekly on ways to work together. They will be able to share more information about those efforts soon. They are utilizing materials developed by Washington State University for its Broadband Action Team (BAT). Summerlin has also been developing workbooks that cities and counties can utilize for their own plans.

May provided an overview of the BSU Idaho Policy Institute's involvement in the project:

- At every stage of the process, the framework for the institute's data collection and work are the five elements of digital inclusion (noted above).
- Several major research streams are under development and will soon be deployed:
 - A statewide survey of the general population of Idaho
 - Methodology for this will closely match the statewide policy survey BSU conducts annually
 - The survey will be distributed to 1,000 Idaho adults via mixed modes – phone, text message, online – prioritizing phone as much as possible so they don't exclude people with digital access barriers
 - Margin of error of +/- 3%

- Respondents will be asked to identify what they consider a fair price for internet service, what kind of device they have, and whether they must use internet at public locations rather than home
 - The institute will be able to capture/analyze information from several covered populations through this process as well
 - A statewide survey to Spanish-speaking households
 - Sample size of about 400 – also using a mixed-mode approach that prioritizes phone
 - Margin of error is targeted at +/- 5-6% because it's a smaller sample size
 - The institute will be able to compare results with responses to the general statewide survey
 - Multiple focus groups
 - Scheduled for mid-March through mid-April
 - Targeting two cities in each of the six ICfL consulting region across the state
 - Conducting sessions at libraries and community centers
 - These will be opportunities for free conversation and a deeper dive into specific digital access needs
 - Stakeholder interviews
 - Potentially face to face while in town for focus groups, but open to Zoom/phone conversations as well
 - Not a set amount, but the goal is to schedule as many as possible
- The institute is also building onto an asset inventory of what Idaho currently has in place. This will help people learn about resources available in their area.
- All of the research protocols will be reviewed by BSU's institutional review board
- Timeline
 - Complete all data collection by mid-April
 - Share preliminary analysis with the ICfL by the end of April
 - Complete an early draft plan in early summer
 - Have a public comment period on the draft plan in July
 - Complete a final draft of the plan by the end of August

Brown reminded call participants that one way to stay informed through this process is to check the ICfL's [DAAI webpage](#), which includes a place to sign up for a newsletter.

Bailey-White provided some final action items for coalition call participants:

- Help spread the word about upcoming regional focus groups!
- If your organization has an event coming up in the next six to eight months, please reach out to Bailey-White (stephanie.bailey-white@libraries.idaho.gov) or Baker (dylan.baker@libraries.idaho.gov) to arrange a DAAI exhibit or presentation. The ICfL can also attend more informal staff or member meetings and civic group meetings – the agency is open to any opportunities to share information and seek input.

Next Digital Access for All Idahoans: Community Coalition Call: Thursday, May 18 at 11 a.m. MT / 10 a.m. PT. Meeting information is available at <https://libraries.idaho.gov/digital-access-for-all-idahoans>.