

Digital Access for All Idahoans: Community Coalition Call

Thursday, August 17, 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
- Mathew May, Survey Research Director for the School of Public Service at Boise State
- Ben Larsen, Research Scholar at Boise State

Meeting Recorder: Shaela Priaulx-Soho, Assistant, ICfL

Time	Item	Minutes	Who
11:00 a.m.	Introductions & Purpose of Call	5	Deana, Chelsea
11:05 a.m.	Our vision for digital access in Idaho & timeline	5	Dylan, Stephanie
11:10 a.m.	Boise State University update on key findings from their research	20	Boise State
11:30 a.m.	Our strategies for tackling the digital divide	20	Boise State
11:50 a.m.	Q&A / Wrap Up	10	Deana, Chelsea
12:00 p.m.	Office Hours and time for comments	30	Deana, Chelsea, Stephanie, Dylan

Meeting Notes

Welcome, Introductions, and Purpose of Call:

Deana welcomed and introduced the purpose of the quarterly community coalition call and outlined the agenda: The ICfL is the lead agency working to create the [Digital Access for All Idahoans Plan](#) (DAAI Plan). Chelsea shared the [DAAI Draft](#) plan.

Our Vision for digital access in Idaho and the timeline

Dylan welcomed everyone and introduced himself and Stephanie. Dylan provided an overview of where we are: It has been a long and incredible process. Officially kicked off November 2022 with developing the [Digital Access for All Idahoans Plan](#). This was when we received the award planning grants and partnered with our friends at Boise State University's Idaho Policy Institute. Spent the past nine months doing research, data gathering, and community outreach and now

have a draft plan released last Tuesday and is [open for public comment until September 8](#). Hope you will react to, read, engage, and dig into it to let us know what we need to add or missed.

Dylan shared a timeline for what will occur next:

Timeline

- **Now – September 8:** [Public Comments accepted](#)
- **September:** Review comments and work on the draft plan
- **October:** Release the final version of the plan
 - NTIA (National Telecommunications and Information Agency) is vetting the plans and may have additional input.
 - The final plan will be released after any adjustments from NTIA. Everyone will have access to it as we wait for funds to implement the plan.
- **First Quarter of 2024:** Notice of funding opportunity. How much that amount will be, how we can use it. We can apply for capacity funds, and then there will be a delay.
- **2024 Late Spring / Summer:** Fund access depends on NTIA's timeline.
- **Beginning of 2024 (60 days from notice of funding opportunity):** Other organizations can apply for additional grants.
 - Along with the capacity funding available to implement the plan, there will also be competitive funding from NTIA. Organizations can also apply for competitive grants to implement digital access and digital equity locally, regionally, and statewide.
- **5 Year Timeline**
 - Lots of work during that time with the money available to us.
 - How to sustain and continue beyond that.

Stephanie commented that she is excited the plan is out there and hopes people will take the time to read through it and provide suggestions on improving it.

Boise State University update and findings

Matthew introduced himself and Ben and explained they are with the [Idaho Policy Institute](#). Mathew explained he was giving an overview snapshot and recommended reading the [DAAI draft report](#), which is much more detailed.

Mathew gave an overview of their game plan for their presentation.

1. Research Efforts
 2. Vision
 3. Strategies & Goals
 4. Needs Assessment
 5. Ongoing Efforts
 6. Implementation
- **Research Efforts**

Launched three major streams on their part:

 1. Focus Groups – traveled across the state and met with communities to identify digital access needs or barriers.
 - Conducted 17 focus groups in person in 13 Idaho cities. 93 participants.

2. Statewide Surveys – Conducted two statewide surveys: 1. General population 2. Focused on Spanish-speaking households.
 - General population survey conducted May 17 - 24. Surveyed 1000 Idaho adults. Surveys were conducted by phone, online, and text.
 - Spanish-speaking survey conducted May 17 – June 8. Surveyed 400 Idaho adults. Surveys were conducted by phone, online, and text.
 - At least 50% of surveys were conducted by phone.
3. Stakeholder Interview – Any covered populations not adequately represented within the focus groups or statewide survey.
 - Fourteen stakeholders were interviewed.

- **Vision**

Mathew reviewed the vision statement: Idaho's vision is to support all residents in thriving online through:

- Digital literacy, cybersecurity, and technical support – providing curated tools and resources to Idahoans to increase digital skills and online safety.
- Public services and resources – improving accessibility for Idahoans to connect and engage with local and state services.
- Affordable broadband and devices – ensuring Idahoans have broadband and internet-enabled devices that fulfill their unique work, school, and life needs.

Mathew mentioned there are quotes from the focus group posted throughout the presentation noting the importance of digital access in Idaho.

- **Strategies & Goals**

Ben explained the goals were dictated to us by the federal program. The objectives are specific to Idaho and created based on the data collection. Ben then presented the strategies and goals slides.

Goal 1: Increase adoption and affordability of broadband technology

There are four objectives under this goal:

1. Expand participation in the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#).
 - Double the number of households in Idaho enrolled in the ACP program to 12%. Currently, at 5% of eligible households.
2. Increase public awareness of ACP.
 - 23% of Idahoans have heard of ACP. Increase that number to 50% of Idahoans through general and targeted messaging.
3. Increase broadband plan transparency.
 - People don't have enough information to get the right plan. More information surrounding what types of broadband plans are available and what they can be used for to make smart decisions for their internet coverage.
4. Develop a framework for lowering costs for internet services, especially in rural areas.
 - Lower the cost and get more broadband to folks. The hope is between helping people sign up for additional help and creating a framework for moving Idaho into the future that will help us increase adoption and affordability across the state.

Goal 2: Improve online accessibility & inclusivity of public resources and services.

There are four objectives under this goal:

1. Increase accessibility of state websites and online services.
 - Folks with language barriers and disabilities can have equal and quality access to state service just like people who may have better technology or fewer barriers to that access.
2. Increase compatibility between state websites and mobile devices.
 - Many people, particularly low-income people, depend on their cell phones for internet service, and many services are incompatible with mobile phone technology.
3. Ensure access to essential state services.
 - With more online services, in-person services across the state have decreased, coupled with the lack of internet service in remote areas. The survey found people who can't afford both landline and the internet, those who live in remote areas, and essential services are being cut off, for example, giving access to emergency services or calling 911—concern for health and safety.
4. Continue development and promotion of Idaho's digital access inventory.
 - Digital assets were explained as any organization or group helping to ensure digital equity across the state. An online directory was created of the online resources available to everyone in the state.

Goal 3: Increase digital skills

Ben discussed a survey question that asked: How confident are you that you could successfully complete the following tasks? The results were provided, and people are more concerned about protecting their personal information online. There are still sizeable minorities of people who have trouble with basic skills. Those are the folks we are hoping to help with this plan.

There are three objectives to this goal:

1. Provide funding for basic digital and computer skill training. Using email, saving files.
 - Many people need training or reminders on some of the most basic things—target grants towards specific organizations helping populations facing significant barriers to learning digital skills.
2. Establish a digital skills education internship program.
 - Many people commented they rely on young folks to help with tech support. Leverage the skills the young folks across the state have and channel them to the programs to help give them experience teaching and running programs. Bridge the generational divides and leverage the talent we already have here in Idaho.
3. Decrease social stigma surrounding digital confidence.
 - One of the main barriers they ran across in digital skills was people feeling they were in the wrong, insufficient, and being judged for not having digital skills. Want to change that so you shouldn't feel ashamed but encourage anyone who can learn these skills. If you seek them out, you have a safe space to learn.

Goal 4: Spread awareness of cybersecurity and online privacy issues

Mathew presented goal four. Goal four deals with spreading awareness and online privacy. This is one area in which many Idahoans expressed less confidence in their abilities.

There are two objectives under this goal:

1. Increase awareness of cybersecurity and protecting personal information
 - Most don't know until it hits the media, and it's too late.
 - The more you can increase the awareness of the importance of it and the steps people need to take care of their personal information.
2. Improve cybersecurity training opportunities.
 - Most people they talked to only received security training through their employer. They did not receive any security training if they were not employed or their employer did not offer a program.
 - The state can offer something the public can do: password protection, how to spot phishing, etc., so people can access this essential fundamental awareness.

Goal 5: Increase the availability and affordability of devices and technical support.

There are four objectives to this goal:

1. Create a digital navigator program.
 - With the increased digital component of our society, it is far more widespread than getting someone on a computer. It's reaching out and touching so many different devices.
 - Chelsea shared a link to [Digital Navigators](#)
2. Establish statewide, regional, and local technical support options.
 - Generally speaking, the closer a support unit is to an individual, the more comfortable they are in using it.
3. Provide funding to refurbish devices for covered populations.
 - Covered populations face unique barriers that can keep them from having access to engage.
 - Anything to refurbish devices – business turnover and upgrade. Providing greater access to disadvantaged populations.
4. Increase devices available at public libraries.
 - Public libraries were identified as valuable resources across the state used by their communities. People went to pay bills, use mobile hotspots, and check their government documents.

- **Needs Assessment**

Some of the conclusions we reached were as part of this needs assessment process, which specifically looked at the covered populations that the Digital Equity Act identified that each state was required to engage with.

1. Low-income households – 20.7% of Idaho's population
 - Less consistent internet access.
 - Expense is a larger barrier to access.
 - Greater reliance on public internet access.
 - Lower self-reported skills levels
2. Aging individuals (60+) 22.6% of Idaho
Barriers:

- Digital skills gaps.
 - The tendency towards home internet.
 - Less likely to seek information online.
3. Incarcerated individuals .7% of Idaho's population
Barriers:
- Limitations in training device availability.
 - Prohibited internet access for security reasons.
 - Limitations in digital literacy training 11 opportunities for rehabilitation.
4. Veterans 6.8% in Idaho
Barriers:
- Veterans are demographically distinct – more likely to be considered aging and have a disability.
 - Less likely to have both home and cell phone internet.
 - Greater dissatisfaction towards government websites.
 - Lower reported digital skills than non-veterans.
5. Of individuals with a disability, 13.9% in Idaho
Barriers:
- More reliant on home internet.
 - Internet affordability.
 - Website and content accessibility (screen reader, high contrast colors for color blind).
 - Substantial gaps in digital skills assessment.
6. Individuals with a language barrier 13.5% Idaho
Barriers:
- More likely to run into barriers with English-only content.
 - More reliant on public access.
 - Higher confidence in digital skills (counterintuitive, but data indicated).
7. Members of a racial or ethnic minority group 18.4% of Idaho
Barriers:
- They are likely to be members of other covered populations.
 - There is no significant difference in digital skills confidence levels.
 - Eternal trust is low among tribal communities.
 - Tribal communities can disproportionately feel economic disparities.
8. Rural area residents are 41.8% of Idaho's population.
Barriers:
- Rural residents are more likely to have no internet.
 - Poorer perceived internet quality in rural areas. Reported low satisfaction has to do with getting the necessary infrastructure.
 - Lower confidence in digital skills levels among rural residents

- **Ongoing Efforts**

Ben discussed there are multiple ways to participate in the implementation of this plan.

State holder engagement

- Continued engagement with current partners and stakeholders.
- Further development of digital asset inventory.
- Establish programs and subgrant opportunities.

- Convening working groups to address specific digital access challenges.

Ongoing research efforts

- Track progress and refine statewide metrics.
- Achieve specific DAAI plan goals and objectives.
- Submit annual reports to the public, stakeholders, and funding sources.

- **Implementation**

Ben encouraged everyone to read more about the plan and the timeline breakdown. The last slide presented has other strategies they are planning on implementing.

- Plan stakeholder outreach events and initiatives.
- Create or expand statewide programs and initiatives.
- Create and award subgrants.
- Conduct marketing campaigns.
- Carry out additional research to measure progress.

Ben thanked everyone for listening to their presentation and taking the time to provide feedback on the plan. He said they were happy to answer any questions.

Deana thanked Ben and Mathew for all their work on the plan and for sharing their insights. Deana noted if anyone had questions, put them in the chat, and they would stick around to answer.

- Deana commented she wanted to draw attention to some events dropped in the chat for upcoming events:
 - University of Idaho webinar called [Computing and Phone Accessibility 101](#) is a free online webinar.
 - The Idaho Library Association [ILA conference](#) in Twin Falls is open to anyone.
 - Stephanie followed up the conference in Twin Falls on October 4 from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. We can reimburse people who have traveled more than 50 miles away. This is an excellent opportunity from a year when we first started this journey on how you can begin to position your community and organization to take advantage of some of these funds that will be made available and how you can tap into that to close the digital divide in Idaho.
- Krista commented in the chat that for people with disabilities, access to specialized equipment and training to use devices and settings to allow them to use computer and phone technology such as Braille devices, learning to use accessibility settings, switch, or alternate access devices is minimal.
 - Deana commented that some of the tools available could be buried and that any time we could share tips to help, it makes a huge impact.

Deana ended the formal presentation at 12:03 p.m. and opened the Q&A session.

Q&A Wrap Up

- James asked if Dylan could go through the plan implementation again.
Dylan gave an implementation timeline recap:
 - [The comment period](#) is until September 8.
 - The committee will take the rest of September to work on comments.
 - October final plan with guidance from NTIA.

- By the end of the year, the final plan.
- At the start of 2024, expect capacity implementation funds to be available.
- Based on the guidance received, apply for legislative approval to use funds for the following year.
- Alongside capacity funds will be competitive funds. Application and notice of funding opportunity will be within 60 days of capacity funds.
- Funds may not come until late spring or summer of 2024. Depends on the applications received and awarded.
- Five-year timeline to implement the plan with federal funds.
- Tina asked how we could participate in upcoming working groups.
 - Deana responded that there will be plenty of calls and events with the implementation plan. Subscribe with the [Digital Access Newsletter Subscription Form](#) to stay up to date.
 - Deana asked about any other ways we can participate in working groups.
- Mitchell introduced himself and stated his group believes that funding should belong to the public trust and that the government should own this infrastructure, but access is open to competition. He gave an example of roads. On a state level, he asked if Idaho is contemplating supporting open access, preferring or providing extra points for open access projects where the funding benefits the public trust. The second part of his question or suggestion was, is anything being done along the lines of the regional open access network to create a statewide broadband network? Mitchell noted he is always available if anyone wants to talk to him offline.
 - Deana thanked Mitchell for his thoughts and questions. She asked if Dylan could address broadband across the state.
 - Dylan replied that dealing with the digital access plan is a joint effort, and we are doing it with the Idaho Broadband Office, the Department of Commerce, and the Idaho Broadband Advisory Board. The BEAD plan, the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment program, is handling a lot more of the infrastructure deployment. We know that there are a lot of broadband infrastructure opportunities in our state. Chelsea shared a link to connect with the [Broadband Office](#).
 - Deana commented on how Stephanie put it: Our part of the plan is that we are the people part, and the broadband office and commerce are working on the infrastructure part.
- Cindy commented in the chat: As you investigate security issues and as more areas and people are provided services, do you have a plan also to help protect children from internet dangers (training, tracking, adult content) on the services and devices that are provided through your efforts?
 - Deana commented libraries in Idaho already have filtering on the internet access they provide within their walls.
 - Stephanie commented that with the public comments and the working team developing cybersecurity and privacy, keeping in mind that K-12 and other aspects need to be addressed in our collaborative plans, the better off we will be. She appreciated the feedback and will include it in the comments.

- Deana also mentioned what that looks like and the different users. They need to consider what type of training best meets their needs.

Deana said the recording will be shared.

- Destinie commented in the chat: Open access is either preferred or required depending on the funding source, but local governments often can't "own" the infrastructure.
- James introduced himself and thanked the ICfL for organizing the meeting and getting the information out. Found it helpful.
- Chelsea noted Chris's comment from earlier: ACP is not expected to be extended. Should the goal state something broader regarding other affordability programs, such as Federal Lifeline and ID telephone assistance programs?
 - Dylan answered it was a huge concern. It is estimated to run out sometime in 2024. Congress is looking at it right now. The ACP program has a lot of interest, but its future is unclear. Many states are in a similar boat and uncertain about the ACP's future. ACP is our best option for addressing affordability on a large scale with covered populations, but there are other things we will want to include and not tie our plans to a single program that may or may not continue to be funded.
 - Stephanie added that internet providers participating in the BEAD funding must provide low-income options for anyone they connect. Noted multiple prongs, and other people are looking at those issues. This is important to note, and we as a state need to look at this as well.
 - Deana highly encourages folks to submit comments on the [feedback form](#).

Deana asked for additional questions. She thanked everyone and is excited to see the output from all the work and what happens next. We will reach out when there are opportunities for engagement.

Office hours ended at 12:20 p.m.

Total on the call: 54

Next Digital Access for All Idahoans: Community Coalition Call: Thursday, November 9 at 11 a.m. MT/ 10 a.m. PT. Meeting information is available at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMof-mtrzljHtTIPOduV4UkP0pTB3gQZ3o2>.