



**HAWAII BROADBAND WORKING GROUP  
MINUTES  
March 30, 2023**

**Members/Designees in attendance:**

- University of Hawaii: Garret Yoshimi (Chair)
- Budget and Finance: Mark Anderson
- Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs: Kevin Nishimoto, Nadine Ando
- Department of Accounting and General Services: Keith Regan
- Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT): Burt Lum
  - DBEDT Digital Equity Office: Amber Ternas
- Department of Education: Dean Horiuchi
- Department of Hawaiian Home Lands: Hokulei Lindsey
- County of Hawaii: Riley Saito
- City and County of Honolulu: Constancio Paranal III
- County of Kauai: Nathan Prescott
- County of Maui: Pono Asano

**Members not attending/excused:**

- Department of Health: Steve Sakamoto

**Guests:**

- Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke and staff, Office of the Lt. Governor
- Laura Archibal – Hawaii Federal Program Officer, National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA)

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Yoshimi called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Information Technology Center, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room 105 A/B, 2520 Correa Road, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96822, with Broadband Working Group Members (Members) participating from various locations.

**II. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION**

Chair Yoshimi gave the informational overview. He explained that in addition to the same challenges all other states deal with in terms of telecom infrastructure and the

ability to get the last mile deployed, Hawaii also has to deal with the distance from CONUS, and the water that separates our island state. This makes our middle mile connectivity a lot more complicated, and a lot more expensive.

Chair Yoshimi continued to explain the opportunities presented to the state based on the multiple major program opportunities available in terms of federal support for broadband. Slides showing the total federal support for broadband programs, and the amounts available to Hawaii were briefly discussed.

Chair Yoshimi then gave an update of the five broadband programs which are currently underway. The Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) is the largest program currently in play. While there is still a question of exactly how much funding the state will receive, the hope is that Hawaii will receive around \$200 million. Hawaii has received an award of \$5 million in BEAD Planning Funds, allocated for outreach and education and to support state broadband office personnel for the length of the project. The BEAD Five-Year Action Plan is currently under development - a strawman draft is posted on the University of Hawaii (UH) Broadband website. This will be a high-level strategic document to describe our approach to expend BEAD funds, and is due to NTIA at the end of July. We anticipate the release of the funding allocation amount by NTIA in early July, to be based on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) maps. An Initial Proposal will be developed detailing how and where the funds will be allocated; the Initial Proposal is anticipated to be submitted by the end of calendar 2023. The submission will be followed by a state challenge process. During this challenge process, eligible entities will be able to challenge the Initial Proposal and inform the state as to any updates to the Initial Proposal. The Final Proposal will include the amounts allocated to contractors that will be responsible for executing the work, and will be submitted to NTIA in the second half of calendar 2024. As noted, there are lots of steps, in particular during the planning stages, with opportunities for statewide participation. The key is outreach, delivering information to the public and properly engaging all the way down to the grassroot levels with our communities.

Additionally, Chair Yoshimi reported on the US Treasury Capital Projects Fund (CPF). This is a program funded under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Hawaii was allocated \$115 million in CPF formula funds. There are two programs that are currently submitted to US Treasury for review. The first project supports a public-private partnership for a new subsea build, and the second supports enhancement of Hawaii Public Housing Authority facilities on a statewide basis. US Treasury has also awarded administrative funds to be used for the length of the project to support the administrative and compliance tasks. The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) also has some funding available under CPF.

Chair Yoshimi, called upon Burt Lum, Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) to give the Digital Equity (DE) program update. Amber Ternas gave the report in Burt's absence. In terms of the State Digital Equity plan, DBEDT has awarded a contract to assist with the preparation of the plan and to conduct stakeholder engagement across the state. There is also an additional FCC grant program which DBEDT is in the final stages of receiving the allocation related to the Affordable Connectivity Program sign up grants which is also a statewide program around digital equity.

Chair Yoshimi summarized the NTIA competitive Middle Mile Grant program. Proposals were submitted several months ago. One proposal was submitted directly by the UH on behalf of the state to build new terrestrial middle mile assets; the second proposal was submitted by Hawaiian Telecom which proposed to build both subsea and terrestrial middle mile assets. The proposals were complimentary of each other to ensure that there were no duplicative or overlapping funding requests. Chair Yoshimi is hopeful that these proposals will get awarded and if they do, will allow for well integrated infrastructure investments that will do a lot of good for the State.

The final update given by Chair Yoshimi was regarding the Tribal Broadband Connectivity program. There was special language in both the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, and in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that provides specific funding allocation for DHHL to benefit Native Hawaiian communities, totaling \$90 million. Work has already begun under DHHL with the initial award of \$17.2 million. UH is assisting DHHL in the execution of this program, and in preparation for the next tranche of TBC funds.

Chair Yoshimi concluded by acknowledging the importance of the coordination and orchestration of applying all the federal funding to maximize the benefit to the state of Hawaii.

Following the Overview and Update, Chair Yoshimi noted the listing of additional resources beyond the UH Broadband website (<https://www.hawaii.edu/broadband/>) - which was provided in the [Broadband Working Group Materials](#).

Next, Chair Yoshimi covered the Broadband Working Group Charter. First noting the importance of the charter in providing clarity and focus of the activities of the working group on a going forward basis. The working group was created under Act 231, Session Laws Hawaii 2022, and is tasked with providing recommendations to the 2024 legislative session, for the creation of an appropriate public body to hold, manage, and

look at the long-term sustainability and manage the public good of assets created, constructed, or acquired as a result of the various federal broadband funds. The intent is to create a recommendation that, one – identifies or creates a public body and two – identifies a structure to hold the assets and actively manages the assets on a going forward basis. The assets will be a result of the range of public investments and will include a number of telecom infrastructure assets, e.g., Indefeasible Right of Use (IRU). Other investments created may include hard infrastructure, and potentially shared equity.

One of the key things is making sure there is a balance and the entity is not over sized so as to create an operating expense drain in the management of the assets. The federal funds are great, but are one-time funds and do not include ongoing operating funds. We could end up coming up with recommendations to place this body in an existing entity but the idea is to make sure that we put some good thought into what is appropriate and best use of local talent available to manage these resources.

Part of the work will include reaching out into the community to look for subject matter experts, for contribution of suggestions and recommendations from different entities around the community. This includes carriers, internet service providers (ISP), those who are in the business of building and maintaining telecom infrastructure, as well as financial institutions and some of the related large enterprises.

While the statutory language allows people to be added to the Working Group, to complete the working group tasks in a timely manner, Chair Yoshimi recommended using the available state broadband office staff to work with the subject matter experts to gather and compile information, to be provided to Working Group members as briefs. Chair Yoshimi called upon the Members to put some thought into potential sources of advice from the communities, including different institutions in the community, corporate, non-profit, individuals with expertise in this space and asked the Members to provide suggested contacts. Based on the suggestions, the staff can have the conversations, accumulate the information, and provide the information to the Working Group to be taken up at subsequent Working Group meetings. This will allow for efficient information gathering from the communities and experts in the field that are responsible for managing these types of assets so the Members can focus on putting thoughtful recommendations forward in a timely manner for the 2024 Legislative Session. Chair Yoshimi also noted, that if during the process it is found to be beneficial to add a small number of additional members to the Working Group that is an option.

The Members had no questions.

Chair Yoshimi asked that the Members provide recommendations to Susan Hirai within the next couple of weeks so that the conversations can begin and that available options can be looked into.

Mr. Regan asked if Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) could just take this on rather than having to create a new board and a new structure. He also questioned why they are not listed as a member. Chair Yoshimi said part of it was due to the uncertainty of the nature of the tasks that the Working Group would be taking on. He noted that this was definitely a valid recommendation and an option for the Working Group in its recommendation to the Legislature. Noting that if the Working Group thinks there is already an existing organization that has within its charter and means and to not create another organization to consume costs, that is a valid recommendation to keep on the table whether it be HTDC or another organization. Chair Yoshimi said that it would also depend on what the organization already has on its plate and its own priorities but these are some of the discussions that the Working Group should have to try to determine if there is a good match.

### **III. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Yoshimi explained using zoom as the best use of time for the Members especially during session and noting that neighbor island county members would have to fly in. He said he is looking at two to four meetings through the remainder of the year interspersed with distribution of documents as more information is collected. He encouraged Members to indicate if they have questions or believe a meeting is merited and that can be scheduled accordingly. Chair Yoshimi said the next meeting will probably be sometime in May but is waiting for a more definitive progress report from US Treasury on what assets might be generated by the CPF projects.

Mr. Paranal asked for guidance on action items requested by Members so that productive and substantive updates can be provided and will allow for Members to work internally with their offices as well as communicate with their offices the efforts of the Working Group. Chair Yoshimi said yes absolutely and noted that this first meeting was to start the work of the Working Group and provide a common understanding of the charter and base information. He said the subsequent meetings will have more conversations as well as help towards creating the recommendations to meet the target – calendar year end leading to the 2024 Legislative session.

### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.