



**HAWAII BROADBAND WORKING GROUP
MINUTES
November 26, 2024**

Members/Designees in attendance:

- **University of Hawaii:** Garret Yoshimi (Co-Chair)
- **Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT):** Chung Chang
- **Budget and Finance:** Carolyn Fujimoto
- **Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs:** Kevin Nishimoto
- **Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO):** Burt Lum
- **Department of Hawaiian Home Lands:** Katie Lambert
- **County of Maui:** Jolie Jenkins

Members not attending/excused:

- **Department of Accounting and General Services:** Keith Regan
- **Department of Education:** Dean Horiuchi
- **Department of Health:** Steve Sakamoto
- **County of Hawaii:** Douglass Adams
- **City and County of Honolulu:** Constancio Paranal III
- **County of Kauai:** Nathan Prescott

Guests:

- **Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke**
- **Office of the Lt. Governor:** Michele Kurihara-Klein

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Co-chair Yoshimi called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. on Tuesday, November 26, 2024 at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Information Technology Center, 1st 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

Co-chair Yoshimi gave an update on the Hawaii Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. The project is in the final week of the BEAD Challenge Process and will wrap up its last phase – challenge adjudication – in early December. As soon as the adjudication phase closes, UH plans to transmit the results of the State

Challenge Process to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration for review and approval. Once approved, the Challenge results will be posted on a public site. UH will also post amendments containing the finalized Broadband Serviceable Locations to the project RFPs.

Co-chair Yoshimi then gave an update on the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund. There are two projects under the Capital Projects Fund. The Subsea Project is in active permitting and environmental review. The RFP for the second project for the Hawaii Public Housing Authority which connects all residents within the public housing facilities on a statewide basis was issued and three submissions were received. The review has been completed and UH is currently in the process of issuing an award and agreement with a public announcement to follow soon.

Co-chair Chang provided an update on the Digital Equity Act Planning and Capacity Program. The Digital Equity Planning Grant has been closed out. The grant was provided to every state and territory. Hawaii's digital equity plan was published in March of this year. He said HBDEO is currently transitioning to the capacity grant. An application was submitted to NTIA and HBDEO is currently waiting for the award. The award is about \$6M and will be used for Counties and nonprofits around the state to develop programs and execute them. It is expected to be a five-year program. While future NOFOs were anticipated, due to the change in administration at the national level, it is unclear if funding will continue. HBDEO has created both a five-year and seven-year plan in case there are no future NOFOs.

Co-chair Yoshimi then gave an update on the Middle Mile Grant Program, the competitive program that Hawaiian Telcom was awarded. The program included a number of links, both subsea and terrestrial, to connect or fill in gaps for critical parts of the Hawaiian Telecom statewide infrastructure.

Co-chair Yoshimi called on Deputy Director Lambert to provide an update on the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. Deputy Director Lambert said that DHHL received the balance of the \$90 million set-aside and has been successful in getting approximately \$72 million primarily for infrastructure. However, there are also some digital equity components in the second NOFO. The first tranche of approximately \$17 million was for programmatic "use and adoption" efforts as opposed to digital equity(DE). DHHL is trying to make sure that both DE and infrastructure needs are being met.

III. DISCUSSION

Next, Co-chair Yoshimi began discussion on the working group's recommendation for the appropriate oversight and maintenance of the state broadband infrastructure assets created or acquired as part of the federal broadband grants funds.

Co-chair Yoshimi said that there had been bill drafts circulated to the Working and Industry Advisory Group that created a standalone entity administratively attached to one of the State departments as well as having its own governing board, executive director and staff. Comments were received from both the Working Group and the Industry Advisory Group.

He said that while the original bill was about creating a new standalone entity, in the interest of preserving funds collected, it would be advisable to instead look at existing entities within the state government that could possibly take on this task. Factors to consider include entity governance, the availability of resources, and consistency with the mission of the entity. Previous discussions included trying to avoid an existing department that has regulatory responsibilities, specifically the Public Utilities Commission and the Department of Budget and Finance, to not create conflict within the entities. Of importance was also the ability of the agency to collect and receive revenues generated by the assets in an appropriate special fund instead of it reverting directly to treasury.

Chair Yoshimi asked working group members to submit any additional comments or feedback to the University of Hawaii. He said UH will consolidate the comments and distribute them to the Working Group members. UH will also update the old bill drafts and try to create a vehicle for conversation during the upcoming legislative session.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:29 a.m.