

SANDAG Regional Digital Divide Taskforce

Meeting Minutes

April 14, 2022 | 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Zoom recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mwpFgsBfSI>

Members in Attendance:

Abu-Bakr Al-Jafri (Caltrans); Adrian Salas (Crown Castle); Alberto Velasquez (Cox Communications); Ana María Ardón (National Latino Research Center [CSUSM]); Ashley Salas (The Utility Reform Network); Carey Riccitelli (County of San Diego HHS); Chanelle Hawken (Cox Communications); Chris Beauchamp (Communications Workers of America); Chris Schmidt (Caltrans); Christine Moore (AT&T); David Reed (University of Colorado); Debbie Shireman (California Emerging Technology Fund); Derrick Robinson, PhD (Center on Policy Initiatives); Elise Rothschild (County of San Diego); Felipe Monroig (Charter/Spectrum); Gladys Palpallatoc (California Emerging Technology Fund); Irina Prokhorova (San Diego Futures Foundation); Jason Anderson (Cleantech San Diego); Jesse Nasland (San Diego Regional Economic Development Group); Jessica Peter (2-1-1); Joe Britton (SDG&E); John Osborne (AT&T); Jonathan Behnke (City of San Diego); Josh Jacobsen (San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center); Kelsey Baird (City of San Diego); Kent Tran (City of San Diego, Promise Zone); Lawrence Hirsch (County of San Diego); Lucero Chavez (Parent Institute for Quality Education); Luis Monteagudo (2-1-1); Maureen Phillips (Library Friends of San Diego County); Meg Hersman Storer (Chief of Staff, 2-1-1); Michael Hadland (Charter Communications); Mina Nguyen (San Diego for Every Child); Nicole Ambrose (County of SD); Paul Morris (San Diego Housing Commission); Raul Armenta (City of El Cajon); Reyna Ayala (City of Imperial Beach); Rob Winslow (County of San Diego, LUEG); Sam Amen (Caltrans); Shahriar Afshar (Verizon Wireless); Teresa Venezuela (San Diego Futures Foundation); Terry Loftus (San Diego County Office of Education); Timothy E. Kelly (Imperial Valley Economic Development Corporation); Vickie Mohn (2-1-1)

Affiliates:

Gary Knight (JK Technology Consulting); Melina Pereira (Caltrans); Roland H. Ok (Southern California Association of Governments); Steven Pontell (National Community Renaissance).

SANDAG:

Krystal Ayala, Lindsey Hansen, Pricila Roldan, Catherine Matel, Danielle Kochman, Jack Christensen, Chip Finch, Dinara Ussenova.

1. Updates on Digital Equity Strategy – Early Actions Underway

Krystal Ayala, Senior Partnerships Strategist, SANDAG, provided an overview of early actions underway as part of the [Regional Digital Equity Strategy and Action Plan](#):

- The Regional Digital Infrastructure Taskforce (ReDIT) consists of staff involved in permitting from local jurisdictions throughout the region. The Taskforce is providing input to develop a model ordinance and policy framework that will streamline the deployment of broadband in underserved areas. Major deliverables will be shared with this Taskforce at future meetings.
- Maximizing public infrastructure to expand broadband is a key strategy in the [Regional Digital Equity Strategy and Action Plan](#). SANDAG is advancing a few key efforts that support this. SANDAG will be developing a regional dig once policy, which will require the installation of conduit and fiber as part of SANDAG-funded projects, where appropriate. SANDAG also developed templates to help public agencies license conduit & share fiber with public and private agencies.
- SANDAG will also be working with local jurisdictions to develop a Digital Infrastructure Database to help public agencies inventory and manage digital infrastructure. This will be a key component of the Digital Infrastructure and Broadband Network Master Plan, which develop an implementation strategy to build the digital communications infrastructure needed to connect our local jurisdictions.
- To help prepare the region for broadband project opportunities, SANDAG and SCAG conducted a joint Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Prospective Broadband Partnerships, which will create a bench of broadband partners. SANDAG and SCAG are in the process of identifying project opportunities to pursue once funding opportunities are available.
- Krystal also shared an overview of key state and federal funding programs and highlighted upcoming workshops including:
 - CPUC Advanced Services Public Workshop
 - April 19, 2022, from 10:00am- 2:00pm
 - Link: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/-/media/cpuc-website/divisions/communications-division/documents/casf-adoption-and-access/casf-workshop/casf-public-workshop-flyer-2022-v2.pdf>
 - Local Agency Technical Assistance Grant (LATA) Webinars
 - Dates and times are to be determined. Information will be posted on the CPUC's LATA website: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/internet-and-phone/broadband-implementation-for-california/local-agency-technical-assistance>
 - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Broadband Program Pre-Notice of Proposed Funding webinars
 - <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov>

SANDAG will be providing a detailed overview of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Broadband funding at its next quarterly meeting.

Finally, Krystal introduced the Federal Communications Commission Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) which provides a \$30 or \$75 monthly discount for broadband services and a one-time discount of up to \$100 for a digital device to qualifying households. Eligibility is based on household income or enrollment in an assistance program (i.e., SNAP, Medicaid, Pell grant, WIC). The California Emerging Technology Fund estimates that there are almost 400,000 households that are eligible to ACP in San Diego County. To date just over 20% of San Diego households are enrolled in the program.

To enroll in the ACP, visit: www.acpbenefit.org.

2. SANDAG Get Connected Campaign

Lindsey Hansen, Senior Public Communications Officer, SANDAG shared an overview of the Get Connected Campaign, a regional outreach effort to raise awareness of digital equity resources in the region, such as the ACP.

Lindsey Hansen provided a preview of campaign messaging and highlighted SANDAG's partnership with 2-1-1 San Diego. 2-1-1 San Diego is the region's trusted source for information and connections to community, health, and disaster resources. Highly trained staff are available 24-hours and provide confidential phone service. 2-1-1 also maintains a database 6,000 services and resources that are updated on a real-time. Jessica Peter, Senior Director of Philanthropy, 2-1-1 San Diego, shared an overview of the 2-1-1 program and ways operators help provide access to community, health, and social services. 2-1-1 San Diego will be playing a key role in the Get Connected Campaign by answering phone calls and connecting the public to the ACP program and related resources that will help them connect to the internet. 2-1-1 has created connections to 100+ organizations and events thus far. To become a partner and be listed in the 2-1-1 database organizations must register. Please contact Catherine Matel, Catherine.Matel@sandag.org, to learn how to register.

Sam Liston, Library Technology Analyst, shared that the City of Oceanside's Public Library recently became a CIE partner with 2-1-1. Sam encouraged Taskforce members to reach out to him to learn more.

Collaborating with partners is essential to spreading awareness and increasing internet adoption. In addition to attending multiple community outreach events in the coming months, the campaign will also develop partner outreach toolkits to cross-collaborate with trusted community partners. The partner toolkit will provide community partners with direct outreach materials including social media posts and print distribution flyers. Final outreach materials are expected by the end of the month. Please reach out to lindsey.hansen@sandag.org to learn more.

Taskforce members are encouraged to reach out to SANDAG to identify cross-promotional opportunities, outreach events, and strategies to share Get Connected resources. Taskforce members discussed opportunities to collaborate and partner on the Get Connected campaign.

- Barry Pollard, Urban Collaborative Project, suggested to have SANDAG attend a fair that is held in the Jackie Robinson Family YMCA. Barry Pollard also suggested partnering with non-profits that work closely with schools in addition to reaching out with schools directly. Barry offered to reach out to Compers Preparatory Academy, Lincoln High School and coordinate with staff internally.
- Alberto Velasquez, Cox Communications, suggested SANDAG to attend the Union of Pan Asian Community's taste of culture event.
- Terry Loftus, County Office of Education expressed interest in partnering in distributing information among the 500,000 students across the county and would like to set up a meeting with SANDAG staff. Terry also offered to broadcast video content on cable channel 16, the local education station.
- Chanelle Hawkins, Cox Communications, mentioned previous efforts to help bridge the digital divide including partnerships with computers to kids and other device providers, schools, and 2-1-1. From her experience, messaging from a trusted source is crucial for the success of outreach. Chanelle also offered to help produce and run PSAs to promote the Get Connected Campaign.
- John Osborne, AT&T, offered to partner with SANDAG and non-profit organization to share information and verify if people qualify for the AT&T Access Program in addition to ACP.
- Shahriar Afshar, Verizon, offered to connect SANDAG with District 9 Parent Teacher Association.
- Paul Morris, San Diego Housing Commission, expressed concerns on limitations and longevity of the ACP and offered to partner with taskforce members to explore this further.

Please note that a copy of the chat transcript has also been provided as Attachment 1 to the meeting minutes.

3. City of San Diego & San Diego Futures Foundation- Digital Navigator Pilot

Armando Haro, Digital Navigator, City of San Diego and Irina Prokhorova, Executive Assistant, San Diego Futures provided an overview of the importance of the Digital Navigator Module and efforts to bridge the digital divide by offering assistance with internet access, technical skills, and social service application support.

- Sam Liston, Library Technology Analyst, asked how to access digital navigators. Digital Navigators will direct people into an in-person location, such as local libraries. Navigators can also answer questions online and over phone.

4. County of LA Emergency Broadband Benefit Program Outreach

The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB), ACP's predecessor, was a temporary assistance program that helped low-income households stay connected during the COVID-19. pandemic through a \$50 to \$70 discount for internet service and up to \$100 discount for the purchase of a device.



Selwyn Hollins, Chief Deputy Director, County of Los Angeles shared recent efforts to accelerate digital equity including the countywide promotional campaign. The multimedia campaign provided resources in six different languages. TV, radio, media coverage, and printed advertisements resulted in a more than 22,000 media impressions and a 43% increase in enrollments. The County of Los Angeles will be conducting a follow-up campaign in the near future.

- Barry Pollard, Urban Collaborative Project, inquired about low EBB enrollment. Selwyn mentioned that this was largely due to a lack of awareness of the program.
- Alberto Velasquez, Cox Communications, asked if the County of Los Angeles efforts are similar to the City of San Diego pilot. Selwyn clarified that the County is implementing a comprehensive outreach program to increase awareness of programs like ACP, including digital navigators. The summary shared today was an overview of a three-week campaign
- John Osborne, AT&T, asked about the data used to identify households that are not enrolled in EBB. With assistance from CETF, the County of Los Angeles estimated eligible households based on the eligibility criteria and evaluated data on households that participate in other County-operated government assistance program.

Action Items:

1. **Berry Pollard, Urban Collaborative Project:** Gompers Preparatory Academy, Lincoln High School coordination on Get Connected Campaign.
2. **Terry Loftus, County Office of Education:** Get Connected Campaign Information distribution for the County and cable channel 16 broadcasting.
3. **Chanelle Hawkins, Cox Communications:** Opportunity to help produce and run PSAs to promote the Get Connected Campaign.
4. **John Osborne, AT&T:** Support for SANDAG and non-profits to verify if people qualify for the AT&T Access Program in addition to ACP.
5. **Shahriar Afshar, Verizon:** SANDAG connection with District 9 Parent Teacher Association.