INVESTMENTS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENT & MODERNIZATION PROJECTS OVERSIGHT BOARD

Minutes

February 27, 2024

Call to Order and Roll Call
The second meeting of the Investments in Information Technology Improvement & Modernization Projects Oversight Board was held on February 27, 2024, at 2:30 PM in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Gex Williams, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:
Members: Senator Gex Williams, Co-Chair; Representative John Hodgson, Co-Chair; Representatives Chad Aull, and Nancy Tate.

Guests: Meghan Sandfoss, Executive, Director, Office of Broadband Deployment; David Couch, Associate Commissioner, Office of Education Technology; and Dr. Shelli L. Wilson, Superintendent, Campbell County School District.

LRC Staff: Jennifer Hays, Adam Johnson, Sarah Watts, and Jennifer Smith.

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion by Representative Tate and second by Representative Hodgson, the minutes from the January meeting were approved without objection.

Broadband Deployment Update

Ms. Sandfoss provided an update for the past year and a half on Kentucky's broadband deployment. There was $90 million awarded last year to further broadband development efforts. In September, $196 million was awarded to 56 projects that reached 42,000 locations. The priorities for the previous two rounds of funding were areas without service. Another source of funding was the Rural Infrastructure Improvement Program. This program provided funding for the Pole Replacement Fund, allocating $20 million to subsidize the cost of pole replacements for broadband deployment projects in unserved areas.

She continued to advise that the Office of Broadband Deployment is actively promoting the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program (BEAD). Internet providers are interested in taking part in that program once funding is available.

Ms. Sandfoss responded to Representative Hodgson's question stating that the prior rounds of funding had to be obligated by the end of this calendar year, but the office has until the end of 2026 to disperse those funds.

Ms. Sandfoss responded to Senator William's question stating that any funds that were oversubscribed will have their application applied to BEAD funds.

Ms. Sandfoss stated that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration has announced nationwide allocations totaling $42 billion that are available, and KY has received over $1 billion dollars through that program. The Office of Broadband Deployment has been working on steps required to unlock those funds, and they are currently awaiting the letter of approval. Once they have volume one and volume two approved, they will be able to access the 20 percent of the bead allocation which has to be targeted toward unserved and economically distressed areas. Ms. Sandfoss added that she believed most Kentucky counties would meet the criteria. The application process for the grants will open this summer.

Ms. Sandfoss responded to Senator William's question explaining that the $20 million pole attachment fund can be used on existing grants or works outside of the grants.

Ms. Sandfoss responded to Representative Hodgson's question stating that the pole replacement cost can be from $2,500 to $15,000. The cost depends on the height and material of the pole.

Kentucky Department of Education Information Technology Projects

Mr. Couch gave a brief background of his technology experience. He continued by saying the Office of Education Technology is the pioneer and national leader in nearly every aspect of education technology. They use what is called a federated design. Some examples of how they made such big strides are: they do not build a lot of homegrown servers, instead they partner with other people who help them build and maintain them, they have monthly meetings with education technicians, and they listen 95 percent and talk 5 percent. They are the only state that asks for a top five feedback, where they ask their constituent groups what are 5 things they are doing well and 5 things they are not doing well with. This allows them to set their goals of improvement in the next year. Mr. Couch added that they regularly get feedback from parents and students as well.

Mr. Couch stated that one of the best things they have is their student technology leadership program (STLP). It's the largest and best of its kind in the United States; they have 60,000 students that are a part of STLP. This provides them a valuable source of feedback, and he believes that the most important part of governance is to listen to the people you're serving.

Mr. Couch stated that in 1993-1994 they were the first to put in place internet to every district, and they did it in 10 months. Kentucky was then the first state that went to cloud based for email; the success of that program led them to utilize cloud-based systems for other needs of the organization. Kentucky schools receives approximately $30 million a year from federal E-Rate funding.

Mr. Couch responded to Representative Hodgson's question stating that the schools are a part of the governance process through their input on bids, and sometimes they are a part of the evaluation committee. Several things about software are considered locally by the district depending on their needs.

Mr. Couch responded to Senator William's question stating that they can see how much schools spend on technology, but districts have almost total choice on how they spend their technology funds. There is also a cost-share for state and district level on certain technology necessities such as internet costs.

Mr. Couch responded to Representative Aull's question stating that they do not have something that says thou shalt do this or that. Instead, the Office offers guidance on how to protect yourself, perform a security checklist, and what you should do if an attack occurs. File servers are a risk, and they are motivating districts to switch to cloud. His office pushes a cyber health check system to districts and provides that to districts at no cost.

Mr. Couch responded to Senator William's question stating they have been grateful over the years that Commonwealth of Office Technology (COT) has not forced them to do some things instead of others. Instead of building a program in-house, Office of Educational Technology tends to go with the procurement process. Their bids are made with several of the main educational software vendors in mind. The competitive bidding process leads to better financial results.

Mr. Couch continued by stating that servers must be kept up to date. Most district cyber attacks are quite simple and would have been caught with a standard technology health

check. More funding would be appreciated to help upkeep technology that was put in place during covid.

Correspondence Received
A letter from Dr. Shelli Wilson, Superintendent of Campbell County Schools.

Next Meeting – April 23, 2024

Adjournment
With no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.