

CCSP Economic Development Subcommittee
Minutes
March 16, 2009

Members present:

Anita Williams, Pam Ligon, Keith Runyon, Matt Runyon, Euodias Goza, Bobby Jones, David Epperhart, Millard Aud, Joe Phelps, Wilber Everett, Lonnie Jackson, Shelley Loe, Chuck Hollingworth, Kim Tran (Connect Arkansas) and Michelle Stockton (Connect Arkansas)

The meeting was specifically set for Connect Arkansas representatives to explain the non-profits role in the statewide broadband initiative.

Kim Tran began the meeting by explaining what Arkansas Capital Corp is and that Connect Arkansas is a non profit arm of ACC. ACC founders and a board member created legislation to create Connect Arkansas from initially understanding that ACC's customers needed broadband to expand their businesses.

Connect Arkansas would offer the following to Clark County as part of their partnership:

- assist in developing a strategic plan for information technology
- hold large community meetings throughout the county with Connect Arkansas reps speaking to spread awareness
- work through core steering committee meetings
- town hall meetings in small towns within the county to reach everyone interested
- assessments will be done throughout the county
- work to facilitate the plan
- 6-9 months to create the plan
- match county needs with providers

What is the impact of this type partnership in other areas?

Kentucky in 4 years of planning has increased access from 60% to 93%. Currently 82% of Arkansas's population has access to broadband options. Ms. Tran stated clearly that education seems to be more of the driver than access. People that have access do not understand the opportunities in using the service. How do we convince individuals to upgrade from dial up or have internet in their homes?

Connect Arkansas has pilot programs in Desha, Woodruff, Columbia and Faulkner counties currently with 3 other counties interested in beginning the planning process with Connect Arkansas as the facilitator. Connect Arkansas is working closely with the Governor's office to find funding options for other counties interested in partnering with Connect Arkansas but have limited funding.

According to maps of Arkansas provided by Connect Arkansas, Clark County has limited access. There are 80 providers in Arkansas and 75 of those are located in Central Arkansas.

A survey was suggested from a committee member. Ms. Tran stated that she has found sending surveys through the schools in backpacks has been the most successful approach. The survey should tell what service the public is using, do they have access or would they use it if the service was available.

Lonnie Jackson stated that a grant would need to be written to pay the fee for Connect Arkansas to facilitate this process. Anita Williams made a motion and Millard Aud seconded. Unanimous approval to move forward with the grant process was given.

If the public is interested in more information in regards to Connect Arkansas's work see their website at www.connect-arkansas.org.

Meeting adjourned.