

## Advisory Board Meeting Minutes for the State Universal Communications Services Program

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Advisory Board for the State Universal Communications Service Program (State USF), pursuant to Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 480-123-150 and as described in Docket UT-150067, held its annual meeting on Friday, January 31, 2023.

The Commission issued a Public Notice of the hybrid meeting on January 13, 2023, and the notice was on the calendar section on Commission's public website.

### **ATTENDEES:**

The meeting began at 1:30 pm P.S.T.; six Board Members were in attendance and one Board Member was not present:

#### **Board Members in virtual Attendance:**

- Carl Gipson, Director – External and Legislative Affairs, Washington, AT&T – (Wireless Providers)
- Rhonda Weaver, Senior Director of State Government Affairs, Comcast – (Competitive Local Exchange Companies or “CLECs”)
- Peter Gose, Regulatory Affairs Director, Northwest Region, CenturyLink – (ILECs serving more than 40,000 access lines in Washington)

#### **Board Members in-person Attendance:**

- Jing Roth, Assistant Director – Telecommunications section of the Commission and Chair of the board
- Rick Vitzthum, Chief Financial Officer Kalama and Tenino Telephone Companies – (ILECs serving fewer than 40,000 access lines in Washington)
- Mark Vasconi, Director, State Broadband Office

#### **Not Present**

- Lisa Gafken, Assistant Attorney General – Public Counsel

#### **Commission staff also attended the hybrid meeting:**

- Sean Bennett, Commission Staff
- Jon Church, Commission Staff
- Tim Zawislak, Commission Staff

## **OPENING COMMENTS:**

Jing Roth, chair of the board, convened the meeting. She gave a brief statement regarding the history and future of the program, welcomed a new member, and thanked all the members for their service on the board. Each board member made a brief introduction.

## **AGENDA:**

### **Summary of Fund Distributed and Timeline for Year Nine (9) 2023 Fiscal Year:**

Sean Bennett summarized the amounts distributed on an annual basis, provided the total amount of funds distributed, and gave an overview of key program dates. Several Board Members had questions about the speed requirement for deployment locations and whether it will be updated to 100/20 Mbps or even 150/150 Mbps to consider federal and Washington state broadband goals. Board Members are generally supportive of a faster speed requirement.

### **Program Results:**

Sean Bennett described the program milestones as presented in the attachments to the board meeting agenda. Additional takeaways included the following:

- Discussed the requirements of receiving a distribution from the SUSF Program. Specifically, a petitioning company must include a broadband plan to maintain, enhance, or provide broadband and must have selected one of four criteria for eligibility. Staff provided a brief description of the eligibility criterion and the number of companies that petitioned in each criterion.
- FCC Form 477 reporting indicates that the percentage of Class B company broadband customers in aggregate, the percentage, and number of subscribers to speeds greater than 100/20 Mbps, less than 100/20 Mbps but greater than 25/3 Mbps continues to increase while the number of subscribers to speeds less than 10/1 Mbps continues to decline.

### **Open Discussion and Comments:**

Jing Roth and Sean Bennett responded to several board members' questions regarding the compliance reports, broadband data collection information, and Form 477 subscribership data. Chair Roth mentioned there is currently a bill to extend the SUSF Program and several board members are supportive of the extension. Chair Roth advised that she will need to discuss the UTC's support of the bill with the Commissioners.. Mark Vasconi indicated that he believes BEAD support will be available to rate of return study areas and that funding will need to be prioritized for unserved locations, then underserved locations.

### **Conclusion:**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:24 PM on January 31, 2023.