

## **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 Monday, January 29, 2024.

The Commission issued a Public Notice of the hybrid meeting on December 4, 2023, and the notice was on the calendar section on Commission's public website.

### **ATTENDEES:**

The meeting began at 2:00 pm P.S.T.; four Board Members were in attendance and three Board Member was not present:

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

- 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)
- Rick Vitzthum, Chief Financial Officer Kalama and Tenino Telephone Companies – (ILECs serving fewer than 40,000 access lines in Washington)
- Carl Gipson, Director – External and Legislative Affairs, Washington, AT&T – (Wireless Providers)

#### **Not Present**

- Lisa Gafken, Assistant Attorney General – Public Counsel
- Jing Roth, Assistant Director – Telecommunications section of the Commission and Chair of the board
- Erika Henry, Acting Director, State Broadband Office

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

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

### **OPENING COMMENTS:**

Sean Bennett advised the board that Jing Roth, chair of the board, would not be able to attend the meeting and delegated the Chair to Sean Bennett, who then convened the meeting. He thanked all the members for their service on the board.

## **AGENDA:**

### **Summary of Fund Distributed and Timeline for Year Ten (10) 2024 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 and attachments 1 and 2. Jonathon Church shared aggregated broadband subscribership data in attachment 3. Several Board Members made comments about the difference between broadband availability and subscribership data.

### **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. Companies with UTC broadband buildout obligations provided coordinates to the locations used to meet their obligation and Staff validated that these locations were not used to meet a company's federal broadband buildout obligation.
- Staff completed broadband outreach to participating companies about the FCC's Broadband Data Collection and worked with companies to ensure the data is consistent with their actual broadband availability. Companies reported process improvements and confirmed that they would challenge locations so that state and federal policymakers and limited resources can be targeted to locations to improve broadband availability.

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

All Board members representing the various companies praised the program's success, its large economic impact (in consideration of the size), and the administration and accountability provided by the UTC. Board members expressed a desire to see the program continue and would like to issue a statement of support for the program considering ongoing legislation. Sean Bennett thanks the board members for their kind words and confirmed that the program has been operated in a way that is consistent with the program's purpose. A proposed statement was not circulated. Sean advised that he will need to check with the Chair of the Board and the Commissioners on the SUSF Advisory Boards ability to comment on SUSF legislation in light of the UTC's neutral position.

### **Conclusion:**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:40 PM on January 29, 2024.