

NTIA Conference

Third Panel: Results of the Broadband Opportunity Council

Aimee Meacham: Welcome to our last Panel. We're here to talk about the Broadband Opportunity Council. This is the first time that we've actually gotten to talk about this at a public forum, so we're pretty excited about that. I am excited to have our panelists here today. First, as you remember from this morning we have Dr. David Edelman, who is from the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the NEC, and David, Larry so aptly provided his biography this morning but I'll give you a little bit more.

David has served for five years in the White House and he's the only Senior Administration Official to serve on three policy councils. He served at the NFC, the OSTP, which is the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and the National Economic Council.

David Edelman: Which means I can't hold down a solid job.

Aimee Meacham: He still only gets paid once, though. Today David leads the issues at the intersection of technology and the economy for the White House, and serves as the point person for broadband. We are happy that he was able to join us for this last session as well.

Keith Adams from the Rural Utilities Service, we are excited to have Keith here because you've heard a lot of questions about rural broadband today and Keith has been at the Rural Utilities Service for a while and is in charge of a telecommunications program that has an annual budget of \$1-billion and is responsible for about \$4-billion in loan portfolios. He has a lot to tell you about stuff that the Rural Utilities Service has been working on to open up some funding for broadband.

Finally I have my colleague, Karen Hanson, and I am pleased to have her here today. She's the manager of Partnerships and Interagency Affairs for NTIA, and she was really the NTIA project manager along with her colleagues at the Rural Utilities Service who co-chaired the Broadband Opportunity Council. She served as our project manager and took the lead on those issues, and she on a day to day basis works with other federal agencies to advocate for broadband funding and increasing broadband policy issues in their shops.

Happy to have you all here today.

I'm going to go right into questions. Larry gave a great background on the Broadband Opportunity Council findings, and so we'll skip right into David, why was the White House so interested in getting this report on federal broadband at this time?

David Edelman: First of all thanks again for all of you who are here, and for those who are staying awake through the Klondike bars, which is no small feat, and kudos whoever came up with the Klondike bars.

The Broadband Opportunity Council was born of this idea of—I mentioned this morning, creating an all hands on deck approach to broadband administration that we obviously had tremendous success, a lot of which you've heard about today with the BTOP grants, with the BIP program, with Connect Ed,

with a number of these initiatives, but the one piece that we felt really could use a little bit more effort was doing what the president refers to as a “regulatory look back” this is a question of taking a moment to take a step back and assess whether we with our federal programs are doing everything we can to one, insure that those programs that could be allocating dollars to broadband are, which is not a straightforward thing. It makes sense if you’re a program or work in an agency that is focused on connectivity and broadband all the time, but if you’re the VA for instance, if you are the Department of Interior, if you are the Small Business Administration, it’s not necessarily obvious how your programs necessarily have a direct connectivity mission. That was part of it, to bring all of these programs up to date, just like we had to bring the E-Rate program out of an era of computer labs and into an era of broadband and tablets in the classroom. That’s sort of a reboot that we have to go through in government.

The second was a basic case of regulatory look back, the president about a year and maybe a week ago was at the Business Round Table and he was asked a question about what one CEO referred to as a “crushing burden of regulation” that they face, and the president kind of took that on a bit. He focused on this question of there is a reality that whenever we have a large and complex government that regulation doesn’t always get it quite right. That the incentives of individual regulators, of individual programs, may create something of a thicket that doesn’t need to be there, and so we in government just as we have an obligation to protect health and safety and to create social goods whenever we can, we also have an obligation to insure that those regulations are staying up to date and are as minimal as possible.

The Opportunity Council was also an opportunity for those agencies that might have had regulatory challenges on the books, to take a look back and say are there ways that we can streamline this. Permitting is an obvious case, this is something I know a lot of you deal with on a day to day basis in looking at new broadband projects.

Looking ahead I think our hope was we would make the contribution that we could both in terms of programs and regulatory recommendations to carry forward the federal effort, but the vast majority of the work here will reside at the state and local level because that’s where the vast majority of these projects are getting the vast majority of, for instance, their permits. Looking ahead certainly our hope is that we’ve offered something of a template to provide a sense of what state and locals can develop. We’ve talked a little bit earlier today about the connectivity index, that’s a way of looking at that.

Trying to carry out this momentum, doing what we can at the federal level and then inspiring further action at the state and local level as well, and then lifting up successes there. We think that piece which fundamentally has an orientation that is not exclusively federal is an important piece of filling in this broader broadband picture.

Aimee Meacham: That’s great, so I have a couple follow ups to that then. As you mentioned earlier, the White House also has the Connect Home initiative and the Connect Ed initiative which you lead, how does the Broadband Opportunity Council feed into that?

David Edelman: This is all part of an end to your first question, creating a broader ecosystem, one where commercial ISP’s feel like they have every opportunity to compete and invest and expand their service, one where municipalities feel empowered to offer solutions when that’s the right option for them. One where schools, where the economics of school broadband are incredibly hard, where we

can make sure they're not left behind. And just as well the Connect Home initiative which is focused in primarily, in the first instance, in public housing communities. These are communities, as we mentioned earlier this morning, over half don't have any connectivity, don't have broadband at home. Part of that's a federal issue, because federal public housing isn't necessarily wired for broadband, but then part of it also is a matter of getting communities to come together, including over a dozen commercial ISP partners who have through Connect Home in the 28 communities that are participating, developed affordability programs or expanded affordability programs to low income housing. Those are the sorts of things that I talked about all hands on deck approach. All hands on deck is not just government. It's government, it's the private sector providers, it's the nonprofits that are working in digital literacy and everybody across the ecosystem, and perhaps most importantly city and community leadership because Connect Home is one of the best examples of that.

Connect Home is not a federal spending program. Connect Home is about creating a catalyst in these 28 communities for meaningful leadership across all of those levels. The way in which these pieces come together, I think over the course of the next several months one thing that we are looking towards and one I would ask all of you who are on the ground and are in many of these communities, help us understand where the success stories are. Literally we want to have opportunities to show where these pieces are coming together. Maine is an incredible place to start of course because Maine schools are connected at a level that is not true for most of the country. We would love the opportunity to show how these pieces come together, maybe it's two or three of the programs we're talking about, maybe it's a BTOP grantee, maybe its work that has happened completely independent of the federal government. We know that these stories are happening all over the country and we want to show that not only are they happening, they're not just happening in San Francisco and New York, but they're all over the country.

I will seriously after this, I will stay over here, come on up hand me your card and I would really love to give the opportunity to highlight more cities and towns that are achieving and showing this vision of what connectivity can deliver.

Aimee Meacham: He's serious folks.

David Edelman: I brought a lot of cards.

Aimee Meacham: I'm going to come back to you David, but let me turn to Keith for a second. Before the Broadband Opportunity Council was announced, RUS was actually undertaking sort of a similar process on its own. Can you talk a little bit about that process because I know it informs some of the work that the Opportunity Council actually did.

Keith Adams: Thank you for the question and thank you for inviting me to be here. I'm very honored to be here. I first of all want to bring you greetings from Under Secretary Lisa Mensah, who was a co-chair along with Assistant Secretary Strickling in the Broadband Opportunity Council and our Administrator Brandon McBride, but I do want to recognize two people specifically. Our Maine State Development Director Virginia Manuel, can you raise your hand, stand up? And our Vermont, the New Hampshire State Director Ted Brady.

Now when we found out about the Presidential Memorandum I got a message or email from the Chief of Staff, for then acting under Secretary Doug O'Brien that says this Presidential Memorandum is coming out and we need to make sure that we're ready because we're going to be co-chairing with the

Department of Commerce, we don't know what the makeup is going to be but we need to make sure that we are prepared. What we did is we pulled together a group of people and Ted Brady was one of them, we had two state directors, Ted Brady the State Director from Iowa, we had our Office of General Counsel, we had our Office of Budget Performance and Analysis and we had our Rural Housing people and our Rural Business people come together to outline a list of all the programs in Rural Development that could possibly provide broadband.

We went through that process which was painstaking because we were asking people to think out of the box, and what we noticed where people said this doesn't apply and that doesn't apply. The same type of mentality we had to overcome with the 25 agencies. Just like David said, some of the people who don't think of broadband as being part of their core mission.

We came up with all of these programs that possibly could be used for broadband and then we ranked them.

1. Which are broadband ready right now?
2. Which are broadband ready if we tweak maybe some legislation, tweaked a little guidance, tweaked how we used it?
3. Had a little longer range view.

We had a list of probably 40 programs before the Presidential Memorandum came out. Once it did we were able to input most of that information into the survey which was the first part of the Broadband Opportunity Council deliverable was we had to come up with a survey, then following that was the request for comment. That prework that we did helped form the four actions that we had in the report.

Aimee Meacham: Do you want to tell us a little bit about the programs you made available even before the Broadband Opportunity Council report?

Keith Adams: I will say that one of the programs that we discounted was our traditional loan program. Even though we asked everybody to come with open mind, we kind of said this is our program, this isn't new money, this isn't a new program but one of the recommendations that we have is to look and rewrite our regulation basically because the regulation for our traditional infrastructure program needs to be updated. One of the areas that we saw through the request through comments that was very important to our program is that we did not really outline adequate speeds, and if we did a little tweaking of our regulation the administrator will have a little bit more flexibility to say what is adequate speed and what is not, and we feel as though that will open up our program for competition, we think it will be better for rural America in general.

I will tell you that we've already gotten calls about that, and people are saying we don't know whether that's a good thing or not, but our feeling is we want to provide the best service to rural America that we can. We don't think there is just good enough service. If we have a borrower, if we have a grantee who is providing adequate service more than the required service then I don't think anybody is going to want to come into that service area. That's one of the ways that we looked at our program and thought that we could use this recommendation to benefit rural America.

Aimee Meacham: That's great, thank you. Keith has touched on some of the process pieces that were in the Presidential Memorandum outlining what's required for the Broadband Opportunity

Report. I thought the process was really interesting, there were a lot of deadlines and there was a lot of work done within the five month period that the Presidential Memorandum announced the report and the report was actually submitted to the White House. Karen can you tell us a little bit about the process?

Karen Hanson: It's most exciting to folks, right? But I'll start by planting a seed that I think what we went through at the federal level could actually be very helpful to those of you who are in states and cities who may be facing similar barriers that the federal government folks did. I think the first challenge that we had to confront was this educational component of if you are putting out a program that has to do with educating your community, are you as a federal entity really thinking about how to translate that educational program to a community that still has to get up to speed with their own digital literacy. Are you taking into account the broadband adoption component of that education outreach, whether it's a health program or whether it's a consumer finance program, or whatever it might be, are you taking into account the broadband adoption component?

We went through a process after we had identified the 25 federal agency members who were going to be part of our working group, we actually literally went through an educational program with them. We had weekly meetings, we talked about barriers that we had found in our work at NTIA in terms of helping community's access programs or barriers that they had identified in trying to access programs, and we went through a survey. We did a survey with all the federal agencies to have them list out, as Keith said, what are all your programs that currently support broadband, what are your programs that could be modified in some way to support broadband. Because federal agencies are large, as I'm sure your state agencies are as well, it wasn't just our working group member that we relied on. The working group member spread this survey throughout their entire agency so that we were hitting all the possible venues and all the possible programs.

That was a really deep dive into the internal nature of the federal agency programs, we also did an external look. We put out a request for comment, as Larry mentioned earlier, and we took the results from that request for comment process and really examined each of the comments to see which agencies were being referenced in those comments. We literally took every single comment and broke it down into where the opportunities existed and went to those federal agencies and said here's what we're hearing from the communities, here are the barriers. We found in some cases that it would require changes to legislation in order to deal with the barriers that were being encountered. That's probably a next step is actually summarizing what those issues were and taking them to Congress.

We had to look at our own agencies and so the agencies really found those comments very helpful and as you look at the report and the various recommendations that were made, we literally were driven by what we were hearing from communities such as yourselves. I think the bottom line is the process that we went through to have HUD talking to DOT talking to DOI and really understanding how their programs, even if they weren't explicitly supporting broadband could support broadband through Dig Once, for example. I think that's really a potentially interesting model for states to follow as well.

David Edelman: And for those of you who might be considering something like this, the idea of a public element of this was actually really important. It created the push for the poll of what we were asking out of agencies. On the one hand we were asking agencies to come to the table and offer whatever they might be able to do in terms of the programs they have right now. The public record almost a shifting of the burden. If an external stakeholder had a grievance with a particular program,

if they had a particular recommendation that they wanted an agency to execute on, that shifted the burden onto the agency to explain why we shouldn't do that which is different than what we were able to elicit within the government around our conference table. I think it actually served as a really important function both to challenge some of the assumptions that agencies might have had about their own program and what the limits of the possible were, but also just to introduce a lot of new ideas that otherwise wouldn't be there. To the extent that it's possible and that you have the networks to engage in this, I think the public process was an equal and important complement to what we were doing internally as well.

Keith Adams: If I could just add under Larry and Lisa's leadership we were able to come together as NTA, IA, and RUS team, and we had teams that analyzed the surveys of the government programs. We had teams that analyzed the request for comments then those teams went out and met with the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Department of Interior and sometimes challenged them to think outside of the box. Then when it seemed like we weren't getting the feedback we wanted at our weekly working group meetings, we asked each agency to prepare a four page slide presentation to talk about their actions and I think that generated a sense of urgency along with making sure those presentations were then funneled back to the principals so the people who put them on the working group knew what they were doing and knew how much they were contributing.

Aimee Meacham: Maybe you guys could explain some of the recommendations that came out about that you are asked in Commerce, too.

Karen Hanson: Because NTIA already has the Broadband USA initiative we were eager to step up and use the report as a vehicle to help get the word out even further to the communities that are out there that are trying to improve their broadband capacity and use. The technical assistance services that we're providing, the products that we're producing like today's Broadband Funding Guide that was release, those are the kinds of products that we're going to be releasing and producing more of.

One example of expansion is through our new partnership with GSA which gets information out to the entire country about any kind of government program that you can imagine. They are going to have a specific focus now on helping promote the value of broadband, how to get communities online, and where to turn to for training.

Larry mentioned the connectivity index today, that's another one that NTIA is going to be leading. We're eager to hear from folks who have already been thinking about this kind of a process, and we're going to be launching that very soon. We're also going to be engaged in developing a broadband research agenda, so helping get academics together with practitioners to see where the remaining questions are that need to be addressed through research.

We're taking on a number of the action items, and of course continuing to work with our colleagues across the agencies to implement the action items that they are responsible for.

Keith Adams: We are excited about the USDA recommendations in the report. I spoke about the regulation change to our traditional infrastructure program, but we also have an action from our community facilities program which is in the Rural Housing Service. Community facilities provides funding for community anchor institutions, hospitals, and libraries, they have the ability to fund

broadband programs. Traditionally they have not because there's been a guidance that they would not fund programs that we would fund in the Rural Utilities Service, but there's specific areas, they can do debt refinancing, they can defer interest, they can do a few things that all we need to do is specify that in some guidelines, work with our partners in the Office of General Counsel, work with the Office of Management and Budget, and we think that is going to be an exciting opportunity for municipal governments specifically to apply for new broadband funding. Not new in the sense that it's new money but it's a new opportunity.

The other program would be in our Rural Business and Cooperative Service, we have something called business and industry loans, those loans can be used for consulting costs for small rural businesses. Those loans can be used for working capital. Those loans can be used for things that advance a broadband construction project where our traditional loans are just construction only, they can be used to complement those programs that are mostly housed in our Rural State Development offices, as we talked about Virginia and Ted. Those will be your contacts throughout New Hampshire and Maine and Vermont.

The last program is our electric program. Our electric program has almost \$5-billion in its smart grid program, and smart grid if used correctly in broadband terms can take 60% of the way to the House. That program, the guidance that's being developed with our electric program and they're going to work with their major association partner. They are going to work with the Department of Energy to make sure that everybody knows that those programs can be used for broadband.

Those three specifically we hope to see something, the report has the timelines that we're looking for, so we're excited about those.

Aimee Meacham: There's a lot of opportunity out there now that there wasn't before for some creative looks at broadband financing. That's great news.

Now for a little bit of a trick question, back to David. Some folks have criticized the Broadband Opportunity Council report as just being another national broadband plan. There's great ideas but what's going to happen?

David Edelman: That's interesting, I haven't heard that a lot and part of the reason I think is the National Broadband Plan has a completely different scope than the Broadband Opportunity Council. The National Broadband Plan which was written five plus years ago, really had a sweeping vision of all of the areas of potential and complementary reform that could lead to a leap ahead in national broadband. It was really intended on some level to be a template for connectivity programs for the whole, at that point eight years of the administration and beyond. I actually just took a look back at the report and many of the areas that it invested in, particularly in the areas of spectrum for instance, happened, and happened to great success.

The Broadband Opportunity Council report which we should also mention we have not mentioned so far, this first report was mandated by Presidential Memorandum. The Broadband Opportunity Council does not go away after the issuance of this first report. This is a continuing institution that I think agencies found to be tremendously helpful in putting their thoughts together and also finding potential areas of synergy between them and so we anticipate that moving forward. The scope of the Opportunity Council in this first report was to do that narrower thing, to look at what programs could be changed and what regulations could be fixed. This isn't trying to boil the ocean, I would argue in

the way that the National Broadband Plan did. Instead it's focused and I think to good purpose on one particular area that we feel like we could make more progress on. It is on some level a really positive referendum on the work that has happened since the National Broadband Plan, that this is where we can focus our attention. I think the same thing can be said of Connect Ed, the same thing can be said of Connect Home. What we're looking at now is in the context of this major progress that we have made as a country, a country where 98% of Americans today have access, don't adopt, have access to 4G LTE broadband. That's huge momentum, and the same there has been substantial progress as we mentioned this morning on wire line base as well. There has been major progress, a lot of Americans are feeling it and the challenge right now is making sure that we're squeezing every possible bit of momentum out of that, and that populations whether they be rural or schools are not being left behind.

Karen Hanson: I would just say that the National Broadband Plan was hopeful in our effort, we certainly looked at it to see whether there were any remaining recommendations for federal agencies that hadn't yet been realized. It was certainly helpful. I think many folks in the room know Blair Levin who was the author of the National Broadband Plan and the father of it, and he himself has recognized that there is tremendous value in having an institution like the Broadband Opportunity Council which lives in the federal agencies and has that much more leverage to make sure the actions are completed.

I think it was a helpful starting point but I think the ownership of the action items being in the federal agencies are going to be a very important part of its implementation.

David Edelman: That's an important point as well. The question was asked earlier today, what is going to happen when this administration is not the administration anymore. Obviously there are some initiatives that we build in at the White House that are White House initiatives that are driven out of there, and there are others that are not. There are those that really have agencies as their key leadership and I think rarely has there been a better example of that leadership taking hold and creating real institutionalization than what we saw in the Broadband Opportunity Council. And particularly given its scope, personally and I hope this is not tempting fate, I would be very surprised if regardless of the party, the next administration does not carry this forward.

One, because it lives at agencies that will endure and the professional staff of which will endure, and these are the folks who are driving a huge amount of the work. But also because its mandate is one, as is true thankfully of a lot of broadband issues, are just extremely bipartisan that really brings folks together and I think you saw that earlier today with Angus King's remarks and throughout the other panels as well.

Aimee Meacham: Thank you, so are there other big recommendations from the report that you'd like to highlight since I have you all here and can put you on the spot?

Karen Hanson: We recognize that this is the first cut and so what you see in the report are the ideas that were able to be vetted and baked in time for an August 20th deadline, which was a huge sprint to get us to that point, but there's still a lot that's happening at the agencies to follow through on some action items that just weren't quite ready yet. So I would stay tuned. But one of the items that I think is very important to everybody in this room is the connectivity issues within tribal areas. There is going to be a significant effort, the Department of Interior is going to be working on in

conjunction with the White House to make sure that broadband is on the agenda for Native Americans to really focus attention in that area.

I would also say that there's a lot of work that's happening. The Dig Once idea has been mentioned, but I think what's important to highlight is there are agencies that have not really considered themselves to be part of that discussion. EPA when there are water and sewer projects, there has been some discussion about whether or not conduit could be laid down concurrently. Local governments were apparently being told that no, they could not lay down conduit at the same time as these water/sewer projects, and this is an example of how important it was to be hearing about this from the local communities. We were able to elevate that issue within EPA, they firmly said there is nothing prohibiting communities from leveraging that opportunity.

I think that's the kind of example as we hear more of those examples and can elevate it throughout the agencies, we'll be able to get the word out and that will be one way to solve those problems.

Keith Adams: I think one of the other interesting recommendations was land use for the USDA's forest service, for the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Transportation are going to be looking at some areas in which we can maybe speed up some environmental clearance issues, or pole attachment issues. I think that's going to be down the road a very important recommendation that right now doesn't seem like it's a short term, but in the future I think that will be important.

David Edelman: Just one concluding thought here. I am excited about the recommendations the agencies came up with. I am really excited about how they can build that into programs that resonate with real people, and I think the best example of this is something we've already announced which is what HUD was doing. The Department of Housing and Urban Development, their recommendations were pretty inside baseball. Their recommendations were modify the community development plot grant program to potentially support broadband investment. Okay, that stands to reason. And change the way that they do eligibility and verification that new and renovated HUD projects insure they have broadband, effectively. It's literally just tweaking the Reg to insure that it was one of the checklist items that had to go. That's not very exciting stuff, but you put those two together and you build into it leadership in cities that have substantial HUD populations and then you build in the participation of ISP's that are interested in doing new affordability programs and suddenly you have the Connect Home program. It was built off a couple of relatively esoteric modifications of existing programs to align them to broadband.

I think everything in this report has the potential to do that. It has the potential to resonate with communities to actually drive more by way of partnership. I would see these recommendations not just as to-do's, not just as checklists for agencies. The agencies are going to be focused on executing on them, but I think one of our challenges moving forward, one that we are excited about working with all of you on is figuring out how we can make those not just dictates on a page for agencies to execute on, but broader programs that really make a difference across a number of different verticals in people's lives.

Karen Hanson: If I could just echo that, I think we were also looking at them as systemic changes. The types of changes that were able to be made will have a lasting impact as the programs continue to be reauthorized every year, so really we are looking at it as a systems change.

Aimee Meacham: With that in mind how do we make sure that all of these recommendations don't just sit on the shelf but that something happens? What are the next steps for the report?

David Edelman: We keep calling the agencies, every week, every single week. We just get on the phone. No. That really is part of it, sustaining momentum of every one of these agencies which had to brief out to their cabinet level person what they are doing as part of this. I think we as the White House certainly have an obligation to help keep that momentum, I think you will absolutely see the President talk more about this sort of thing, and not just in the context of a dedicated event or trip or announcement focused on broadband. A good example of this is he was up in Alaska, the first time a president has been to Alaska other than to refuel, for a really long time.

While he was up there he was in a town called Kotzebue, Alaska which has a tiny population, the vast majority of which are native Alaskans. There he, among other things, highlighted the fact that right there is actually a Connect Ed success story. It's a story of a school that went from, has absolutely miniscule spending per student, but through some really innovative partnerships and making the most of the resources they had were actually able to deliver personalized education at kids' desks, every kid with a tablet and fast internet connectivity. These are kids that go home and they don't have internet connectivity. There the President said, this is one of the programs that I am proudest of, that I have been working. To see that come into a conversation that was about rural poverty, it was a conversation about economic development outside of our urban centers. It was a conversation about native youth. To bring broadband into that is to change the narrative of this, it's to take an issue that was esoteric or fringe or technical.

I remember when I first came into the government you talk to people about internet issues, about technology issues and they are sort of "okay great" and they expect someone that looks like me that has tape on their glasses to kind of like fix it. That's not the case anymore. Just as you don't hear cabinet members say "I don't really understand economics" technology is no longer an acceptably foreign language for cabinet members, for senior officials in the government and I think that's really true across the country.

As with that I think you're seeing technology and connectivity issues get into the mainstream on all of these public policy priorities. We're going to keep reinforcing it from the White House, from the President's side, but I think more importantly even the kind of innovation and energy that the agency showed in putting these recommendations on paper will drive it forward.

Aimee Meacham: That's great. Just again with that in mind, for next steps, how do folks let you, Keith and Karen and David. How do they let you know that they're encountering some sort of barrier that maybe wasn't out there at the time of the report that you weren't aware of, and you have an opportunity to maybe talk to these agencies and get that barrier removed?

Keith Adams: I will just say that right now we're still working through how we want to use the Broadband Opportunity Council contact list, we don't know whether that's going to be included in the resource guide that the NTIA just released today or how the agencies want to structure the contacts. For right now you can always our USDA, myself or NTIA, if you have any questions about Broadband Opportunity Council member from Department of Interior, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, and we can connect you with those people right now.

I will tell you that we will continue to meet, we have a conference call, we had one last week, we'll have one this week, we will continue to make sure that the agencies are involved, and as David said we're going to be checking on the recommendations. Specifically I have a meeting next week with the three groups outside of my own in USDA to develop a plan for reporting, because we know Under Secretary Mensah and Secretary Vilsack will be asking where are you, where are you with meeting your milestones.

Karen Hanson: I would say we're certainly eager to hear from folks, whether it's for our technical assistance for Broadband USA or about Broadband Opportunity Council specific issues. We have a generic email address, I can take a second and share it: BroadbandUSA@NTIA.doc.gov. That's certainly one way to reach us and personally I'm always happy to hear from folks who are encountering barriers.

Keith Adams: For people in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, you have your rural state development directors here, we have 47 state offices and if you go into any of those offices and you ask about a broadband program as far as what Rural Utilities Service has, we will work together to get you an answer. We will work together to put some information together for you. We will work together to come visit any of your groups that you want us to speak.

Aimee Meacham: I know they're serious because that was a little bit of a plant question, and I have been working with Karen and Keith for a while and I have actually seen them work on these issues with these agencies and make some changes and get some of these questions answered. Please feel free to contact any one of them for those issues.

Just before we move to audience Q&A, one more question for you guys. What else about the Broadband Opportunity Council report do you think is important for the audience to know? Let's start with Karen.

Karen Hanson: I think just that it's a first step, it's a living document and we are eager to hear from you to see if there are other ideas that you'd like us to consider. But it's going to be our plan to implement that but also there might be more to come.

Keith Adams: I would say if you go back to what Larry talked about this morning, the guiding principles, that guides the whole report. Everything that he talked about, reducing barriers and opening up ideas, the report builds on those with specific recommendations, but there could be five or ten more recommendations to follow those guiding principles.

David Edelman: You can do it yourself. There's no reason that we have a monopoly on the good ideas here or by any means have the most amount of work. I think anyone sitting around in this conference room can make a contribution to a report like ours to want the state level, to want the municipal level. We were only able to scratch the surface in five months. Five months sounds like a long time, and in government is lightning speed. This is something that can be done in a rapid way and the moment really is now. This is a unique moment of attention to these issues and it shouldn't be wasted, and it's our hope that we created something of a template and if it's a template that works for you, great. And if you want to do something that's completely different, that's fine, too. I think the vision here is a shared one of trying to get more stakeholders on the record to try to keep moving all this forward.

Keith Adams: I will say if you're going to do it yourself in your state and local government make sure you have your clearance process worked out, because if you can imagine trying to get 25 federal agencies to get their secretaries, cabinet level secretaries to clear a document, that was not easy.

Aimee Meacham: Thank you. Alright so with that we're going to go to audience Q&A. You can see there's a couple stand mikes in the middle aisles here, so please feel free to come up and ask a question to the Panel. John, you're first.

Question: Thank you, I'm John Windhausen with the Schools Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition. My question is for Keith, we were very excited to see the Broadband Opportunity Council report be open to accepting nontraditional providers of broadband services and that allows all the municipalities and others to participate. That's great, my question for you is historically the USDA programs, there's been a strong preference for former lenders of USDA programs, which gave a strong preference to the incumbent telephone companies. I think some of that is in the statutory language. My question for you is how can we work with USDA or how were you planning to deal with the preference in the statutory language for the telephone companies in a way that will still allow you to open up some of these funding for nontraditional providers for no telecom's?

Keith Adams: Thank you for the question. We're always open to anybody's ideas about how we can run our program better. Specifically with our regulation rewrite, we're going to look at defining what is adequate service. The preference that you mentioned to the incumbent carrier would be if they're providing adequate service. If they're not providing adequate service we feel as though there should be other companies that would be able to enter into that market much like our Farm Bill Broadband Program allows for, and this is on the loan side. We're going to try to make those programs sync up a little bit and give our administrator a little bit of flexibility on defining what is adequate service.

Aimee Meacham: Great, I'm not seeing a big line here so get up and come to the mike.

Question: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Larry Sterrs, I'm with the Unity Foundation. I have two questions. One is about RUS grants relative to borrowers, maybe a slight follow up from the following question. I think you had to be qualified as an RUS borrower to get a grant. I'm wondering if that program is now open or available to non-borrowers who were maybe traditional incumbents in the first place.

Keith Adams: I can answer the grant question. We have two grant programs, the Distance Learning, TeleMedicine grants, which we hopefully will be announcing the successful awardees within the next 30 to 60 days. But those programs are open to anyone, you don't have to be a past or present RUS borrower, and our Community Connect grant program which we just awarded this summer are open to anybody.

Question: Thank you, and my other comment or question actually is about digital literacy. We are running right now a digital literacy project with a large collaboration of partners, for profit and nonprofit, offering free digital literacy training in rural community in Maine. I've heard on and off throughout the conference particular places where we might go to get information, NTIA sounds like a real source. If you were going to direct me to the top two things that I should do to find out how we

can improve and expand our program, and most importantly collect data that will be useful for us to further it, what would those be?

Karen Hanson: I would definitely put you in touch with my colleague Emy Tseng who may be here, she's working with cities and communities to help them understand how to use surveys to develop programs. She's right there in the back. Please come to the NTIA website, we have lots of resources about digital literacy. There is DigitalLiteracy.gov, which is a collection of curriculum that's available and we could certainly talk about broadband adoption programs. We have a broadband adoption toolkit that we put out which has a lot of great concrete best practices that might be able to help you. But we can certainly talk.

Question: Great, thank you very much.

Question: USDA, my name is Teresa Kelley. This is a wonderful opportunity to sort of bring USDA, the agriculture part of that into the conversation. I'd love to hear, I don't know if you're aware that here in Maine we've had a huge influx of young farmers who are doing a tremendous amount for small farmers and creating an awful lot of really good food that a lot of the country could probably use from us but a lot of them don't have access to getting into those markets because they don't have broadband. If I could ask you as the USDA representative about what do you see as the future for farmers in America that broadband represents?

Keith Adams: That's a good question. Since 2009 we have invested, the Rural Utilities Service, over \$23-million in rural broadband in Maine. We have three broadband initiative projects that will end on Wednesday that total about \$9.4-million. We think the future is bright. We have, our grant programs are competitive, they're oversubscribed, I mentioned those of Distance Learning, TeleMedicine, and Community Connect programs. But we have our traditional loan programs and we have our Farm Bill loan program which in fact that announcement period ends on September 30, so we'll be reviewing applications there. We have a general field representative who works with our state office, his name is Kendrick Gordon, Rick Gordon and if anybody wants to reach out to Rick. Rick is very aware of the landscape here in Maine, and we will be happy to entertain any ideas about any loans that will increase and enhance what broadband service is in Maine.

Aimee Meacham: Julie, hopefully you're talking to Susan Corbett, too, who was up here a little bit earlier. I know she was talking about the digital literacy side and you're talking about the access side, but I think getting together might be a great idea for both of you.

Question: Hi, I'm Saul, I'm from Cambridge and I'd like to ask about the Connect Home program which I understand is a pilot, so my question is take a leap into the future after the pilot. It's a concern of cities like mine where the larger source of affordable housing, HUD sponsored projects but things like inclusionary zoning which you could call a public private partnership for cheap housing. That seems to be more and more true in most of urban America, how do you see affordability programs like Connect Home being modified to address these sort of people who are not in highly localized sites, they are literally spread out across the city?

David Edelman: You put your finger on what I see just speaking personally as exactly the limitation of Connect Home as it presently exists. Connect Home was built in part because this was an idea that emerged from HUD. Secretary Castro actually himself had this idea as we were moving towards State of the Union, as one of the next directives he wanted to put it in. We built it as a pilot,

and it's a big pilot, like 28 cities, but we built it as a pilot to test to see what works. By virtue of who was administering it, it is right now limited to these public housing communities. Personally looking ahead, let's say the pilot is successful that we get great results across all the areas that we're measuring there. I would love to see Connect Home expand both in terms of reach to far more than 28 communities. I would like to see it be an open invitation for partnership like Connect Ed, so not limited to 28 test areas but any city that can get its leadership together and build these partnerships. And I think it has to expand beyond public housing, because there are a lot of Americans in that bottom quintile that I talked about, the 51% of them don't have broadband at home that are not in public housing. They might be in assisted housing, they might have some living arrangement that is no way state subsidized, they deserve the same benefits.

I think there have been some interesting private sector led areas, the Comcast Internet Essentials program is one of many of our affordability programs that are not just open to residents of any government program but in this case are benchmarked against the National School Lunch Program, which is somewhat a proxy for income level. That is a population that absolutely should be attended to here. I think like I said speaking very frankly, we are interested in the ideas of how to do that right now. I think that is the next phase of Connect Home, it's going to take a lot of work to get there because it is not as easily cured and monitored and accounted for as a program that's administered by HUD, but that's where we have to go with this. I certainly welcome your input and those around the room of what the next best way to do that is because of the success that we have already been able to have on a small scale with the program. Thank you for that.

Question: My name is Irv Thoma, I am Chairman of the EC Fiber Consortium of 24 communities in east central rural Vermont. The Farm Bill of 2013 which was signed by President Obama either late January or early February in 2013 included a rural gigabyte challenge. \$10-million each year for five years. When will we see a program announcement for that program?

Keith Adams: Thank you for your question. That program has not been funded since it was introduced to the Farm Bill so we're waiting for funding on that program. As soon as it's funded we will start immediately with guidance and implementing the program, but until it gets funded there's not much we can do. Sorry about that.

David Edelman: Call Congress, and talk to them about the importance of funding things, generally.

Keith Adams: And just so you know, we're reminded of that program by Senator Leahy's office quite often.

Aimee Meacham: David can say that, we can't say that. Any other questions? I'm going to do a plant question, all of the panelists have talked really about how the process they use for the Broadband Opportunity Council report is really reputable at the state and local level. What if states or localities want to talk to you guys about the process or work with you in the process, is that a possibility? Can you tell them how to do that?

Karen Hanson: Absolutely. I think we'd more than happy to share all of our process documents and talk you through what we did. I think it's really important to have, as we did with the White House, have a very strong mandate from the highest level of your state or locality and then also have a very strong team that can do a lot of the work and who knows the program and the importance at the

ground level. Having both that top level executive support and the strong team who can execute I think is really important. But we'd more than happy to talk.

David Edelman: I say this as a guy who's portfolio includes Intellectual Property policy. I would encourage you to plagiarize us because we don't have copyrights for the federal government. Seriously, the President's Executive Order on this up online. You can Google it, Broadband Opportunity Council Executive Order. That text is frankly generic, applicable, add a few clauses and send it to your governor's office and say why shouldn't we do this? Like I said, just as we're looking to how we can expand Connect Home in the next year and beyond, we would love the opportunity to work with states that want to do this themselves and to help them get the mandate to do that. We often have events at the White House, events around the country that bring in folks that are taking the next step in these initiatives that we have outlined. That's going to be great for some folks, maybe it won't be great for others, but this is an open invitation. We would love to have the opportunity to support you in that and we would love to have the opportunity to help you get the buy in you need. We have a whole office of intergovernmental affairs. We talk to governors every single day, Democrats, Republicans, across the board, all the time. This is the next phase of what we're up to here and if we can be helpful to you in doing that, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Aimee Meacham: I hope our web audience heard that and heard it loudly. Keith, did you want to add any final thoughts?

Keith Adams: No, I think David and Karen covered it. I would just say that I would use the existing infrastructure that you have here, Connect ME, other states have similar initiatives and just make sure that you have a commitment from everybody who is going to be leading the effort, that they're going to make this happen and it is a priority.

Aimee Meacham: Great, well we only have a couple minutes left and I would just like to get any parting thoughts from our panelists before we go.

David Edelman: Since the subject of this Panel is the Broadband Opportunity Council I want to end the way we began which is to say that these reports don't come out of nowhere. These reports take an incredible amount of work and it's easy for the White House to put something on a page and say okay go do this, and really, really hard to bring together 25 federal agencies, to get them to bring their creativity to the table, to get them to suspend bureaucratic fighting and potential resistance and to think differently about their mission. I just want to conclude by thanking the rest of the folks on this stage and many down in the conference overall as well as those that couldn't be with us today from Department of Agriculture, from the NTIA that put this report together. I think it created some incredible momentum for our government and I just really wanted to thank you for the great, great work that got us here and will sustain us for at least the next 16 months.

Keith Adams: I would just say that I want to thank Doug Kinkoph, who opened us up this morning. He's not up here on this panel but he was a very integral part of what we did here, and I want to thank everybody who made this effort a possibility. I feel like we are honored to be partnering with NTIA, the NEC, OSTP, and all the other agencies. We felt and Under Secretary Mensah made sure that I knew that one of our positions, one of my marching orders was to make sure that rural America was represented in this Council, and that the recommendations were going to bring advancement to rural America, because that's what we do at the Rural Utilities Service. We wake up

every day to make sure that our loan and grant programs are connecting rural Americans to the highest quality internet or broadband services that we can provide.

Karen Hanson: I want to echo what David and Keith and Aimee have said, it was really a very intense team effort that we hope will be bearing fruit for all of you. I just want to echo the thanks that we've already shared to those of you who submitted comments and who gave us insights into where you are experiencing challenges at the local and state level, because that was really helpful. I think the door is still open, we would be more than happy to continue hearing from you and I am speaking for my colleagues, NTIA, we're really eager to get out there and help you with our own technical assistance efforts. Please reach out to us, keep us informed about how you're seeing these changes impacting your work, or if not let us know so that we keep working to make it better.

Aimee Meacham: Thank you all, and just to let you know for those of you who haven't read the report or haven't seen it or haven't heard about it, it is available on the White House website. It is a very comprehensive thorough report, and we welcome your thoughts and feedback as Karen mentioned. You should go out and take a look at it, because it's pretty thorough and there's a lot of recommendations in there, but if something was missed I think Karen and Keith would love to hear from you, as well as David.

I want to thank the Panel, you guys were great. Keith Adams, thank you so much. Karen Hanson and David Edelman, really appreciate you taking the time today to talk about this report.

Thank you all.

I will bring back up Deb and Doug to close us out.

END