Meeting Summary & Discussion Points

The summary bullets included below reflect key points of the discussion as well as feedback and responses to questions received during the meeting.

1. **Introductions**
   Meeting attendees included:
   - Andrew Gunning (PPACG)
   - John Liosatos (PPACG)
   - Jason O’Brien (PPACG)
   - Laura Crews (PPACG)
   - Danelle Miller (PPACG)
   - Mark Northrop (PPACG)
   - Norm Steen (Teller County)
   - Josh Pace (Colorado Springs)
   - Bryan Curtis (Colorado Springs)
   - Greg Winkler (DOLA)
   - Tom Eisenman (Park County)
   - Erik Stone (Teller County)
   - Victoria Chavez (El Paso County)
   - Dole Grebenik (Manitou Springs)
   - Elliot Sulsky (FHU)
   - Matthew Downey (FHU)

2. **Tri-County Study Background**
   Jason O’Brien (PPACG) provided an overview of the study. Issues related to broadband and internet connectivity previously came up numerous times during discussions with stakeholders, so the project team identified the formation of a Communications & Broadband Working Group as an initiative to support efforts by jurisdictions in the study area to expand broadband. PPACG is interested in facilitating an ongoing working group after the Tri-County Study is complete.

3. **Broadband Funding Opportunities**
   Matthew Downey (FHU) provided an overview of existing and upcoming funding opportunities for broadband improvement/expansion projects available from both Federal and State programs. Much more information about each program is available online.
   - To get funding from the BEAD program, projects have to support telehealth, workforce, and/or online education efforts
   - Colorado is expected to receive up to $700 million from the BEAD program; the State has to prepare a plan for spending the funds
     - DOLA will send info on the application process to PPACG once the rules have been finalized
   - Areas have to meet the definition of ‘underserved’ to qualify for some of these funding opportunities, and that can be difficult to measure because private entities that collect that data may be unwilling to share it
   - The Department of Local Affairs and Colorado Broadband Office can provide a lot more information about the various funding pools
   - Colorado will be soliciting project applications for a $160 million capital broadband project program this year
   - Money from Federal programs is generally not able to be spent on wireless projects – only fiber
• The breadth of funding opportunities out there

4. Facilitated Discussion
FHU facilitated a discussion focused on four main questions for meeting attendees:

1. What current or upcoming broadband-related plans, projects, or initiatives are underway in your community?
2. What are the main obstacles or challenges related to next steps or future projects?
3. What kind of multi-jurisdictional collaboration, conversation, or pooling of resources might be helpful? What topics would you be interested in exploring further through this group?
4. Do you agree that broadband infrastructure is appropriate to integrate into a broader ‘one dig’ policy for roadway construction projects?

• Park County is working on identifying underserved areas through a survey of connectivity data
• Teller County has a technology planning group and is looking to establish partnerships with ISPs to expand broadband
• Woodland Park is working on a feasibility plan for expanding fiber, with a focus on partnering with ISPs
• Installing fiber is just one part of broadband expansion – billing, towers, customer service, and maintenance are other important elements to consider, and which the public sector may not be best suited to provide
• It can be difficult to get different ISPs to coordinate/cooperate, as they all have their own expansion plans which may compete with one another
• Colorado Springs is working to build out its fiber network by 2028; service will be operated by third parties
• Colorado Springs received funding for a variety of digital access efforts, including public wifi, providing digital devices to community members, and providing technology training
• Funding is a challenge for Colorado Springs because it does not qualify for many of the programs aimed towards rural and/or underserved areas

5. Next Steps
The meeting wrapped up with a discussion of the attendees’ interest in continuing these working group meetings on an ongoing basis.

• There is interest in making this an ongoing working group
• It was suggested that these meetings be held monthly ahead of expected funding releases later this year, and more intermittently afterwards; the next meeting should be held after more detailed information about the BEAD/DOLA funding opportunity is provided
• Meeting topics could include preparation for funding applications, discussion of ongoing and desired projects, and overview of various broadband-related topics
• Consider also inviting ISP representatives, IT staff, and the State’s regional broadband coordinator to future meetings
• It was also suggested that a webpage dedicated to broadband be prepared that includes funding links, ISP contact info, a glossary of terms, ‘how to’ documents, and other relevant information