

SANDAG

Digital Divide Taskforce

Meeting Summary

July 1, 2021 | 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Zoom Recording: <https://youtu.be/IRe2smsCWvQ>

Members in Attendance:

Abu-Bakr Al-Jafri (Caltrans), Adrian Salas (Crown Castle), Alessandra Muse (Imperial Valley Economic Development Corporation), Angelica Santiago (National Latino Research Center), Cody Petterson (County of San Diego), Debbie Shireman (California Emerging Technology Fund), Dennis Gakunga (City of Chula Vista), Elaine Tulving (Anza Borrego Desert Research Center), Gladys Palpallatoc (California Emerging Technology Fund), Irina Prokhorova (San Diego Futures Foundation), Jason Anderson (Cleantech), Jonathan Behnke (City of San Diego), Katelyn McCauley (San Diego Economic Development Group), Kelsey Baird (City of San Diego), Kemi Pavlocak (O'Shun's Orchard), Konane Martinez (National Latino Research Center [CSUSM]), Maureen Philips (Library Friends of San Diego County), Meagan Openshaw (City of Imperial Beach), Michael Hadland (Charter Communications), Michelle Jaramillo (San Diego Foundation), Mina Nguyen (San Diego for Every Child), Patty Chavez (Parent Institute for Quality Education), Reyna Ayala (City of Imperial Beach), Sal Espinoza (Communications Workers of America), Shahriar Afshar (Verizon), Sharlene Ornelas (SANDAG Social Services Transportation Advisory), and Terry Loftus (San Diego County Office of Education); Antoinette Meier, Chip Finch, Danielle Kochman, Hasan Ikhata, James Jimenez, Krystal Ayala, Lindsey Hansen, Ray Traynor, Sanjiv Nanda, and Yelena Granovskaya (SANDAG)

1. Regional Digital Equity Strategy Updates

Lindsey Hansen, Associate Public Communications Officer, shared an update on the new digital equity website and upcoming media events. Taskforce members can participate in an upcoming Speaker's Bureau Training on July 14, 1 – 2 pm. Antoinette Meier, Director of Mobility and Innovation at SANDAG, shared an overview of the outline for the Regional Digital Equity Strategy and Action Plan.

a. Key Findings from Broadband Gap Analysis

Sanjiv Nanda, Entrepreneur-In-Residence at SANDAG, presented key takeaways from the broadband gap analysis conducted by SANDAG staff.

Patty Chavez, Parent Institute for Quality Education, reiterated the disparities that underconnected residents face and asked for further detail on what devices people are using to access the internet. Antoinette responded that data from the American Community Survey (ACS) may be available to address this.

Cody Petterson, County of San Diego, noted that the conditions for broadband access and adoption in the San Diego region are complex and noted the need for coordinated engagement with state and federal stakeholders to bridge the digital divide. Sanjiv responded that addressing the digital divide will require coordination from public and private stakeholders.

Kelsey Baird, City of San Diego, stated the disparities highlighted in the gap analysis are consistent with City of San Diego findings. She also noted that analyzing race can offer further insights into digital inequality in the region. Yelena Granovskaya, Associate GIS Analyst at SANDAG, responded that staff will evaluate ACS data to understand this. Sanjiv emphasized use of ACS for regional analyses given concern with reliable sample sizes at small geographies.

Irina Prokhorova, San Diego Futures Foundation, inquired about analyzing availability of satellite internet in the region. Antoinette noted that there are many satellite providers that operate in the region, however many do not meet the federal threshold of 25/3 Mbps.

Kemi Pavlocak, O'Shun's Orchard, expressed agreement with findings from the broadband gap analysis and highlighted the disparities between rural areas of the county and more urbanized areas.

b. Broadband adoption and access strategies

Antoinette shared an overview of the proposed strategies to improve broadband access and adoption in the San Diego region. Support from taskforce members was requested to inventory programs and services addressing broadband adoption, digital literacy and equity.

Patty Chavez, Parent Institute for Quality Education, emphasized need for complementary strategies to address both access and adoption.

Terry Loftus, San Diego County Office of Education, noted that inadequacy of federal broadband thresholds (25/3 Mbps) and expressed support for increasing availability of higher-quality broadband service as part of the strategy. Antoinette agreed and reiterated that the strategy is intended to support state broadband directives to provide 100 Mbps download speeds.

Abu-Bakr Al-Jafri, Caltrans, noted importance of strategies that address last mile connections. Antoinette noted that the proposed strategies address deployment of middle mile and last mile solutions.

Kelsey Baird, City of San Diego, inquired about coordination among taskforce members and SANDAG to pursue funding to support with programming and implementation of the strategies. Kelsey also volunteered to lead a work group among taskforce members to conduct an inventory of digital equity programs and services in the region.

Sharlene Ornelas, SANDAG Social Services Transportation Advisory, inquired about digital equity organizations and programs that provide assistance to individuals with disabilities. Sharlene also asked that maps produced as part of this strategy be designed to be visually accessible.

Chip Finch, Principal Engineer at SANDAG, highlighted the importance of forward-thinking broadband policies to address the digital divide.

2. Verizon Recommendations to Accelerate Deployment of Wireless Broadband

Shahriar Afshar noted that Verizon recommendations to accelerate broadband deployment will be shared with taskforce members.

Link to document: [Recommendations to Accelerate Deployment of Wireless Broadband](#)