



Digital Opportunities: *Growing Connections Across North Carolina*

June 4, 2024 / 9 a.m.- 3:30 p.m.

Location: Blue Ridge Community College Conference Hall

Important Links:

- [Event livestream](#)
- [BAND-NC Resource Hub](#)
- [Digital Opportunities Survey](#)
- [Main slide deck](#) (includes Telehealth Breakout slides)
 - [Engaging Sectors Breakout Slide Deck](#)
 - [Digital Skills Breakout Slide Deck](#)

DHT Welcome and Western Plan Celebration

- **Speaker:**
 - **Sarah Thompson (Dogwood Health Trust)**
- [Growing Connections: Celebrating Western NC's Digital Inclusion Plans and Projects](#)
- Announce upcoming initiatives around digital opportunity - use resources to help with infrastructure, adoption, and advocacy - especially infrastructure funding to bridge the gap
- Leverage existing partnerships that are already on the ground in the region - put together community-based collaboratives and fund them
- Collaboratives will cover a county or group of counties with a hub that keeps it together with other grassroots organizations that are most connected to the people affected by this issues
- Hub manages the collaborative and allow for them to build strength among themselves and decide which initiatives they want to apply for grant funding with
- Slide with specifics about roles of hub and collaborative - will have webinar soon about all of this
- Timeline - right now working with dogwood partners to create RFP to make sure that the initiative is what everyone needs
 - *****[Link to timeline slide](#)**
- June 26 - Informational Webinar with more details and specifics!
- 10 collaboratives within the 18 counties and in the Qualla Boundary - with a 10-week training process
- Begin implementing projects after about a year
- Dogwood will fund the initiative, but there are more funds that they want to tap into for western NC so they will be helping the region to bring in some of that money



Working with Funders to Support Digital Inclusion Panel

- **Moderator:**
 - Maggie Woods (NCDIT)
- **Speakers:**
 - Lariza Garzón (Hispanic Federation)
 - Scott Southern (SECU Foundation)
 - Sarah Thompson (DHT)

- We have come a long way with digital equity funding even within a couple of years, highlights how ahead of the game we are since we are already having these conversations
- Lots of state and federal funding for digital equity - Maggie gave an overview of the funding (Amy Huffman will talk abt federal funding later but Maggie discussed overview for funding, Maggie also talked about state level funding) local funding for digital equity across the state, 230 applicants, 150 million dollars of funding requests, shows key needs in NC and the opportunity here
- Each person comes from a different perspective and what are the current discussion with digital equity and funding in their workplace?
 - Lariza
 - Works with the hispanic federation
 - Looking for funding to support hispanic groups that are working to help boost digital equity across the country
 - Based on inequalities latino communities lack with digital aspects, esp computers
 - Grants, equipment, capacity trainings, and curriculum are what they focus on
 - Goal is to have other implement plans in their community
 - Community based organizations are the best to do this work - trust of community, embedded there, and have the cultural knowledge
 - By providing funding to groups, they help the community become more resilient and make the groups stronger (can do tutoring, immigration clinics)
 - They support their groups on the ground and listen to their organizations that they fund
 - Prioritize community and trust them (community based organizations) to do what is best for the community
 - Scott
 - Statewide organization that works hard to provide resources to all counties in the state

BAND NC

Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Uniquely funded by members with checking accounts - 1\$ fee/month was decided to be used by the board to do philanthropic resources across the state
- 5 years ago turn focus from capital buildings and scholarships (so members know where dollars are going) by looking at where the funding was going and parts of the state where being left out and they wanted to support across the state and let members know that they were with them and started doing capacity building
- Best channel for funding broadband and infrastructure is through groups like IEI where it's more of a hub for the funds to trickle out to successive circles around it
- Provide direct funding to rural organizations (smaller groups that are in tier 1 or 2 counties) to provide resources across the state
- Sarah
 - Initiative rolling out in the summer
 - NC rural center broadband initiative funding, their work connects communities to infrastructure money to get through the complexity of the system and get to help rural communities get the help and infrastructure they need
 - Support infrastructure and continue to be open to gaps in the region that are left after funding is distributed, can they come help groups with projects they already have
- Coalition building: as a funder how are you thinking about coalitions, how mature do they need to be before applying for funding, what values are you looking for in coalition
 - Sarah
 - This work is all abt partnership, you dont have to be an expert you ust need to be connected to the right folks
 - Those who are on the ground and understand the needs of the community are the people who can advance the situation more rapidly
 - Its all about working together and staying connected
 - Scott
 - Out of the pandemic was the good thing that we learned as funders how to build coalitions to address state wide needs
 - Statewide funders were not experts or had all the answers but werent afraid to ask questions and bring in experts to provide information
 - Learned how to work together and what was the niche and what made most sense for their funding and had people come in to fill in the gaps
 - We focus on where money is coming in and identify gaps in funding and coverage
 - Working on identifying some other big players like dogwood to address issues statewide
 - Lariza

BAND NC

Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Encourage collaboration between all grantees because they all have different experiences and those can strengthen their programs
- Conduct advocacy with grantees, provide capacity training so they can conduct advocacy effectively
- Have networks for referrals for individuals because community based groups have resources and together they can better serve the community
- The community they work with is traditionally marginalized so it can be difficult to work with bigger organizations and build the big networks
- Respect their process and realities because they are in the communities and better understand the community culture
- What are you excited about? What models or plans or organizations that you wanna highlight?
 - Scott
 - See work in action through grantees, two specific examples
 - Organizations become dependent on access, space, network, and equipment
 - Memory care - provides training and opportunities for dementia patients and caregivers, want to serve all of West NC and needed to expand digitally, did an expansion in haywood county and created another hub and can now reach out to people from the west and even the entire state and even bordering states (being willing to stretch is making a big impact)
 - Surrey medical ministries - talked about how they used BAND NC and had been able to create 20 mobile hotspots for the farming community esp latin folks, work with uninsured and potentially undocumented people and value them as humans and been able to provide telehealth to the communities
 - Need to continue to embrace technology and not be intimidated by it but connect with experts to continue to do the good
 - Sarah
 - Excited about what's possible and how much it has risen in the country
 - There is so much money being invested and west NC is really good about connecting people together over this topic
 - Use the momentum to pull the region into the next era
 - Lariza
 - Inspired by creativity that community groups have
 - In this region in the west NC workers center - organizing to teach tech skills to their members
 - Grantee - has mobile clinic that they can take anywhere and use for telehealth and can be where the community needs them
 - Latin american coalition - computer labs teach people how to do resume and connect to relatives
 - Meet specific needs of communities



- **Questions:**

- Scared because feels that she lives in a community that doesn't understand the officials that don't understand (or wanna) and don't have a digital inclusion plan, nervous about being left behind as a county, she has been doing this since 2011/12 and is excited but wants to see her community moving forward but is lacking support - how to get the elected officials excited about moving the county forward?
 - Sarah: It's all about coalition building, find other groups and people whose clients need these services and form a local coalition
 - Sarah: Everyone goes straight to infrastructure so there is lots of education that is needed, best to tell stories about someone's life changing by getting connected, tell a story the leaders will be able to relate to
 - Loriza: Community based groups have a hard time doing advocacy because they have so many other things going on, first (if funder) fund advocacy efforts, then rely on allies who can help create connections so that it isn't so taxing for the organization, realize that these connections are not going to happen overnight because of distrust and disclusion, the process is more important than the goal
- Spent years talking to foundations to get them into the scene and now they are, what do you hear at the foundation level and is it taking off and are there roles for local advocates to funnel info to foundations? How can we get more foundations involved?
 - Scott: we all work with different buckets of funding and have a broad spectrum of focus areas, it's good to see people coming on board, many foundations are driven by data and metrics (not always a good thing but reality), groups can help tell the story and share the success and be encouragers and try to get them to embrace you and get onboard, gets more difficult outside of the state level, comes down to storytelling and making it a story of impact of success or future success
- Scott: raise hand if representing municipalities
 - Wanted to say to them that we come here as representatives as a funding community as a component, they are just as important or even more so and are the boots on the ground and can see what works and what doesn't, become a digital welcome wagon and invite people to see what is happening and see what's outside the community with digital, decent level of competitiveness and seeing what other have you may want for yourself so lets share with each other and encourage others

Rural Broadband Challenges and Opportunities Panel

- **Moderator:**



- **Michael Kelly (Rural Center)**
- **Speakers:**
 - **Samantha Schartman (Connect Humanity)**
 - **Christa Vinson (Rural LISC)**
 - **Kevin Jackson (EBCI IT)**
- Rural center collaborative broadband initiative - seeks to bring broadband to rural communities using local groups to create a process for the adoption and access of broadband, the tech assistance is coming to new counties as it has been previously, look to local groups to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the residents
- Kevin Jackson, Eastern Band of Cherokee
 - Band is made up of 52,000 square acres - has own fiber ring, own their own isp, the build out of phase one has started, start in the north (they have a diagram for this), several challenges in developing infrastructure
 - There are big companies that are being set blueprints, lots of challenges to build in their area
 - Working on getting a good local/community wifi system out in the next few weeks, lots of exciting things for the band and world as their technology begins to develop
 - Digital asset management system and partner with groups to preserve archive and identity
 - Wants to be able to tell the Cherokee story by preserving photos, culture, and help preserve the language. Phase 1 and 2 are the archives of the museum in Robbinsville
 - Doing cataloging and use it for education and some parts that are for band members only but really want to share the story that you can't get from books
 - Digital archive
 - Spoke to archaeologists about what they do with their findings, and a lot is sitting on shelves and they plan on bringing it back to the band and digitize them
 - Phase two is language - can teach online classes with it and it preserves the language
 - Also adding stories and photos, schools and the band can all use it to learn more about the Cherokee people
 - Phase 3 and 4 - take a 3d approach and create a 3d version of their speakers so that they will always have them and have that voice and continue to carry on the language lesson with them with the use of tech
 - Fiber and wifi build is moving forward and so important to the project as a whole
- Samantha Schartman, Connect Humanity

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Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Appalachia digital accelerator program - help 68 communities across 10 states go through a 3 vertical planning process
 - Digital equity and opportunity - what support systems do you need that best help your people
 - Access
 - Underwrite the cost of everything
- Hope to get everyone aligned and access federal funding that is available
- Working with ARC and COGs get everyone in line to access federal funding available (BEAD).
- So many communities are not eligible
 - There are problems with FCC maps, problems with self reporting of ISPs across the country. Many places that need support will not be eligible.
- What does that mean?
 - Need to investigate support systems and how private sector relationships can help access funding
 - Build coalitions and tell the stories
 - Look at the way local stakeholders can help with costs
- Appalachia has patches of unserved territories that are usually ineligible
 - How do we plug the holes?
 - People live and work there and if left to other programs they may be left unserved
 - Pressure on community stakeholders to find the path forward
 - State level has received some funding to hire individuals to figure this out, but cogs have not and have to learn new things they aren't familiar with and yet they are the ones who determine the plans for generations to come
- How do we bring support to communities to find a path forward and put the right people in place to get us to a better connected future
- Christa Vinson, Rural LISC
 - Broadband infrastructure is a new area of work, but utilization and upskilling has been core to the work nationwide
 - She is part of the national rural team
 - Approach a lot of their work as an intermediary all through the lens of capacity building
 - Believe in long-term-ism of community building with broadband at the center
 - LISC and Connect Humanity is helping to fund a network in Alabama in the blackbelt. Brookings podcast plug.
 - Interviewed groups that interact with at need communities and their thoughts - could be good resource for those listening
 - Think about proceeding infrastructure building with digital literacy programing especially in rural communities

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Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Be thoughtful about it as funders and participants
- Funded local groups as an organization with the ways that they are moving forward and learned a lot about how non-profits how adapt their work and staff are trained to work to integrate technology both as a non-profit and to the community
 - Interesting to see how many organizations actually wanted to learn broadband 101 (Brian Rathbone)
 - How being a provider can relate to broadband availability
- Showed real community members who are helping move digital inclusion forward, provided an example from the Navajo nation, Halifax county and the black belt in Alabama, Rio Grande Valley in Texas
- Current work: broadband help hub project with some other intermediaries
 - Looks at where to invest with availability and tech assistance
 - Look at partners and their service areas and build up from there
- Going to be doing 50 projects over the next 2 years
- Question: From your perspective, how do you balance out rural broadband infrastructure and moving forward with adoption goals in new or existing communities
 - Kevin
 - What is the community need - talk to the community members
 - Use the community ideas and provide ownership which helps boost the initiative
 - Lack return on investment and including them and their thoughts helps with that
 - The terrain is challenging to build in and contractors are not used to it, so there isn't return on investment and contractors may leave after just a few weeks
 - Try to pitch the best ways to go based on the industry to each community
 - Smantha
 - Have to tell multiple stories about communities in different ways to different stakeholders
 - Often talk about infrastructure and digital opportunity activities as two sides of the same coin
 - Some groups understand why it is important to individuals
 - Others speak to a different language and want to understand how the value come back to them, especially private stakeholders
 - Need their help as stakeholders and need them to understand how it works as well
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 - Can't just have new network that you invest in and have no one adopt or have people adopt but not meaningfully use
 - Looking for real digital transformation, not just connectivity

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Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Make them into hubs of opportunity for future generations
- People need to think and dream big about all of this, and so her group provides the support structure so that community individuals can do just that
- Access and adoption need to be parallel roads
- Christa
 - Broadband help hub will be short term engagements so they will be nimble and tactile and help build confidence in participants
 - Start the momentum that is necessary to get to the long term growth and opportunities outcomes
- Question: as part of those internal conversations, how do they shape intended outcomes and goals in order to determine who you work with and when you bring individuals into that conversation
 - Christa
 - Came to name digital connector through program evaluation after a few cohorts
 - Our emphasis alongside digital connectors is to encourage the organizations that have community knowledge to get with those who are leading infrastructure
 - Cohorts took on names based on the intersection they are interested in and wanting to work with
 - Patient conversation but been energized by interest of community facing organizations have in wanted to bring the conversations to the local level
 - Been energized by direct community interfaces have had interest in infrastructure
 - Samantha
 - Encourage planning partners to create planning groups and cohorts that are members of organizations that work with at risk communities
 - Start there with planning process
 - When starting or do program planning, where are the people at and start at those locations
 - Libraries aren't the only ones that should be on the list, looking at faith communities were training and programming would be best located
 - Places in community that are hubs of social interactions and are great places for that interaction and connection
 - Faith communities are very strong partners. General stores, barber shops, are the hubs for interaction and hubs for programming.
 - Kevin
 - Run into lots of problems with consultations with funding agencies as a tribe

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- Have to make sure that partners understand what they are trying to do, it's not connections it's about doing it right with the proper funding
- Go out and look at all the services that are there and do everything that way
- Question: can you share some examples of digital inclusion projects that honor culture context and identity?
 - Kevin
 - Developing public wifi and community wifi infrastructure
 - Digital asset management system will help more than just the Eastern Band, it will help schools learn more about our culture
 - Helps people understand who they are and where they come from, as well as emergency services
 - Samantha
 - Appalachian digital accelerator program - digital equity cohort, deep dive and group working session on how best to meet the needs of their community
 - Started off with deep investigation into demographics and then learning about their needs and how to best meet those needs and locate places of intersection
 - Tremendous intersectionality in rural communities, it is a melting pot of all the other categories on the list
 - Sometimes just harder to reach because they are more spread out
 - Christa
 - Interpretation of the culture aspect is to talk about “high speed internet but this work moves at the speed of trust”
 - Adaptation and reorientation of the work takes a little while
 - The people who know their community account for culture and how they will react to and adapt and take advantage of digital opportunities
 - Deep rooted organizations are useful in these conversations as community connections are so important
 - Everyone found ways to get into the work in an example given and it is possible everywhere for people to adapt to the community culture
- Question: sharing digital inclusion projects and the role they played
 - Samantha
 - Their program is a planning grant, so they don't run projects but their communities think about how to create those
 - Kevin
 - Overarching fiber build and advancing technology for services
 - Recently released member portal where members can access services through the portal
 - Christa
 - Alabama project



- Mississippi project with the Choctaw
 - Cable company that deployed fiber connectivity to 2,000 reservation households
 - Knowing long-term-ism that there was a connection to the community to help resolve a problem of needing good local jobs for the future generations
- Local funder role in financing an infrastructure build around petersburg in VA
 - Had an affordability challenge with some availability challenges
 - How education systems were working around Covid
 - Cameron foundation provided a match requirement for local internet build across the two counties and pass the funds through the governor's programs that help subsidize broadband work
 - Virginia State University went after a minorities communities program and submitted a proposal to help be a part of the solution for the community
- Question & Answer Section - not enough time in live time but may be some in cvent

Telehealth: Lessons Learned and Looking Forward Breakout

- **Moderator:**
 - John Graham (NCTNA)
- **Speakers:**
 - Emily Hamilton (Vecinos)
 - Courtney Moore (Office of Rural Health HIIT Team)
 - Steve North (The Center for Rural Health Innovation)
 - Kevin Parker (CareNet)
- Telehealth is here to stay
- Grew by 30 times not 30% during covid pandemic
- Lots of hiccups along the way. Provider side and patient side. In the end both sides were satisfied with the experience.
- Post Pandemic
 - Specialties: one has been outdistancing others, behavioral and mental health
 - Trends track closely with what you would observe across the population.
 - Highest adopters are hispanic and asian/pacific islander (find doing it over the phone)
 - Trends by medicare entitlement: aged (lowest), early renal disease, disabled (highest)
 - Trends by age group: 65-85 lowest level of adoption, 0-64 much higher, 15-25 is lowest rate of adoption.



- What is your organization currently working on and what are telehealth access needs specific to the different communities you work with?
 - Emily: Located in Western Carolina University. Farmworkers in southwest 7 counties. Primarily latino patients. What we found during pandemic is providers and patients really like telehealth. Helped with some social determinants of health. Telehealth is fantastic for acute issues. Last year started dedicated tuesday thursday telehealth schedule. Bilingual provider full time. Extremely useful to us. Have limited availability for appointments so telehealth is great. Biggest challenge is privacy. A lot of times for a patient to get privacy they have to go out in the elements. Lending out hotspots for migrant camps. Eevn with hotspots only so many people can be connected at once, also use to talk to their family. Video telehealth is difficult. Big issue is that a lot of farmworkers don't have US phone numbers. With end of pandemic response, lots of programs don't allow for non us phone numbers
 - Courtney Moore: NCDHHS also has past life agriculture experience. Train the trainer program that was originally geared towards community paramedic. . With that program we've seen that maybe some of the curriculum wasn't there to accompany the TTT. Put focus in digital skills. Educating patients on insurance and what it covers. Bringing that education to the patient. Started talking with community members and really listening to a lot, finding a lot of one man and women shows in rural counties with patients that are apprehensive of using them from the get go. Taking a step back and thinking of how do we frame this in a different way? Get involved with faith based communities. Health education to increase literacy levels so patients can better monitor their blood sugar and then have telehealth follow up so they don't have to travel far.
 - Steve: telehealth and virtual care since 2007. Schools as a site for kids medical care. School based program has expanded from 3 to 110-120 schools in NC. Over that time technology has improved as well. When you see someone in their home it's a tremendous advantage because it's who they really are. Some folks get dressed up when they go to the doctor. Hybrid care. Instead of seeing a patient every month, I now see them twice a year in person to do a foot exam, but otherwise I have more frequent touches with telehealth and have a better arch of care with them. More closely connected to their care team. In school setting by removing barrier of distance, 93% of kids returned to class after the medical visit. If those kids had to leave school or work it would be incredibly unproductive. Telehealth is not the answer for every health solution. Just because you can provide access to care doesn't mean there are more slots for the cardiologist, etc. the no show rate is much lower in virtual care because you remove barriers.
 - Kevin: Regional manager for WNC CareNet. 6 centers across the state of NC. Mostly located and serve rural communities. Officially in WNC is 7 rural counties, but due to telehealth that number has expanded to 12 counties in NC. platform



and conduit to reach more rural areas. CareNet's mission to go where services don't exist and where we are called. It has created portability and accessibility for many patients. Prior to March 2020, telehealth was something we dreamed about. Expand into home health, public health nursing, community nursing. Seen it expand out into working with primary care physicians. In 2020 data is very skewed, we didn't know how to code telehealth. But since then since then we're around 30% so far as telehealth and face to face.

- Not only are there technical challenges with getting people connected to their physical and mental health....
 - Emily: with our providers, several of which are volunteers. Deciding what is telehealth vs in person. Medical staff education on this too. Providers follow up what would work with telehealth instead of in person. Telehealth is extremely appealing to our patients. Undocumented patients put themselves at risk when they leave home. Telehealth removes level of fear of going out. Moms who have multiple kids who don't have to worry about childcare.
 - Courtney: Benefits to patient AND physician, making sure capacity is there from care team and physician. Is it an apprehension to telehealth or health care?
 - Steve: access points and trusted locations. Through series of events, community foundations....former paramedic from community who is telehealth presenter. Other part of this is physician acceptance. What we really need to see is not substituting in person visit with a virtual visit. But partnering workflow.
 - Kevin:
- What is needed statewide, regionally, locally...
 - Emily: What I'm not seeing talked about yet...we operate on very limited funding. One of our biggest challenges is... now that telehealth is almost a patient right, how can we make it a priority to provide affordable hipaa compliant methods?
 - Courtney: the infrastructure for broadband connectivity in rural connectivity is a non starter for what we need for this. We can bring this everywhere but if they don't have education it's a wasted effort. How do we use it. How do we begin put all of these pieces that begin to work in silos
 - Steve: 2 parts that stand out: quality of care. Pretty clearly you should not prescribe antibiotics for an ear infection if you can't see the ear. Expanding on quality of care and patient safety. Medicaid telehealth policy. Great improvements there but need to continue on this policy journey.
 - Kevin: comprehensive broadband expansion plan in rural areas. Echo what's been said around policy. NC medicaid policy really knocked it out of the park. Would advocate for uniformity around policy. Rules are different everywhere. Some uniformity and parity as well. Some professional organizations with psychotherapy licenses with interstate compacts. Need for behavioral health care is so much higher than all of these other areas but allowing psychotherapists to see beyond state lines (with limitations). Would love to see some other folks (APA, Social work group, etc) form some expanded



Engaging Across Sectors for Digital Inclusion Collaboration

- **Moderator:**
 - Samantha Schartman (Connect Humanity)
- **Speakers:**
 - Tatiana Magee (HCCOG)
 - Don Michael, Jr. (Central Piedmont Community College)
 - Brian Scott (OurJourney)

- Samantha
 - Such an important topic and needs lots of partnership and collaboration from private and public centers
 - Glad to talk with panelists about how they see the above fitting in and talk candidly about partnerships
- Topic: how do you engage with groups around digital equity
 - Tatiana
 - Digital inclusion is such a broad topic, in their work, they have an initial belief that the topic would be abt infrastructure but that doesn't correlate as much, IEI come to first few meetings to help with infrastructure, universally understood that we need digital equity, local groups don't know us so how do we meet the people who are already on the ground
 - Kickoff meetings with local gov and school people and community organizations
 - Introduced vocabulary with the people/groups on the ground
 - Lots of convos were just relating vocab to what they were already doing
 - Don
 - Had convo with an instructor who wasn't happy about IPS, the instructor said that computers were not being taken care of, went to off campus learning spaces, 10 off campus learning spaces he didn't know about and saw mold and computers not being taken care of, came back and wanted to do digital inclusion stuff starting in 2015
 - Works with colleges and community campuses who aren't prepared for digital inclusion, student tech training was not encouraged because of a paper by 2000 by Marc Prinsky (spelling) about digital natives and enemies, 10 years of research goes against what he wrote, he influenced community colleges and universities to where they thought they didn't need to do any digital training because college kids should know, there was data and demand but the colleges didn't look at the data
 - There is collateral damage happening to students because there are people who aren't getting the help they need and/or benign forced to learn on their own

BAND NC

Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Created one central space for students to get that information and training on campus
- Pillars of: digital literacy assessment, training (students and faculty), advocacy and community service
- Trying to help the campus but also make a national awareness campaign to fund student digital training against the idea of digital natives
- 4 grants towards digital literacy training but never uses the word students which can lead funding to go elsewhere
- Brian
 - Works with the incarcerated - think about how tech has changed since the 90s even
 - There is so much change and some are in prison before tech booms and may never have seen technologies that we have on a day to day basis
 - Imagine coming out of a cave after 30+ years and imagine holding a cell phone for the first time ever
 - This newly released inmate had so much confusion with technology and has been struggling with how to use it
 - Magnify our day to day frustrations with tech and magnify it for those who are being released
 - They are developing an app that can provide reentry resources for every county
 - The challenges are overwhelming, so they want to do the app but also have to educate clients - hoping to use grant funds to continue to develop app but also to provide a helpline for individuals who don't know how to use their technology
 - Reentry community doesn't have lots of digital inclusion or help/aids
 - Work on collaborations especially without funding
 - Life cannot be operated without a phone now and it's a huge part of our lives and a huge part of the solution for those who are experiencing reentry
- Topic: talk about the problem of funding (always need more) and where it is coming from and future funding
 - Tatiana
 - Funding for digital inclusion (started in 2021) - created a plan with subsections with each county - received funds for each county which gave incentive and hope to something that can be doom and gloom
 - We got ball rolling and once plan was rolling they applied to DIT funding
 - Good framework with funding for planning and implementation and hopefully after implementation
 - Had to be realistic about how to keep partnership and collaboration active even without funding (donations, volunteers, free spaces)
 - How do we make sure that counties are all taken care of

BAND NC

Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Everyone has a job plus one and even though funding may not be there it is our responsibility to not let it fizzle out after implementation of an initial plan
- Some of these things were happening before the pandemic and if students don't have internet you had to go find it and some students and groups are not able to access the results of ideas and goals that we are hoping to implement
- Don
 - We get no funding
 - The work has to continue, solution was to use old school community organizers - he talks with everyone and was authentic in saying that we need help, told faculty to send students to them (capital that they can send)
 - Talk to department heads and that faculty can use office hours to help student learn about digital literacy
 - Do it without funding and utilize human capital
 - It makes you a detective and try and find out how funding systems work
 - Read the grants to find out how to get them and look at what they are reporting out
 - Talking to people in the tech ed department about whether students are getting trained or not
 - They will look to correct system so that students can get help and the funding that is needed
 - Correct the system so that the next time it happens people will be able to move forward
- Brian (extra question: what other funding streams can we find to help with sustainability)
 - Their group specifically is statewide but funding is at county or regional level and have to get creative
 - Look for help through other nonprofits that provide professional skills via volunteers (taproot) which can cost nothing
 - Looking towards colleges and universities as well which can cost nothing
 - Encourage people in nonprofit state to look at colleges and universities as students are in on social justice issues and can help
 - Can get funding from churches and faith based communities
 - Can get funding from microgrants
 - Just hired someone who can find alternative sources of funding
 - Every organization has to be creative with this even though we hope a billionaire or millionaire would fund the whole campaign
 - Continue to grow and be creative with finding funding
- Topic: what in your opinion is what we need to be aware of when engaging across sectors



- Don
 - Learned that students came with trauma and needed to become more trauma and ableism informed
 - If you wanna solve a problem, centralize the solution
 - Students are always looking for a source, so make it easy for them and don't scatter it out
 - Need to find ways to confirm that you are actually doing the work and have evidence of it
 - Be brave! We get scared for various reasons but there are people who need your help and you need to be brave for them and they can become brave because of your help
- Tatiana
 - Have cross sectors in their organization with everyone in their own silos
 - Make sure that you are dispensing your information and make sure its centralized
 - Work through the people who are already doing the work, don't reinvent the wheel
 - Make it a conversation, never an interview or one way conversation
 - Give people examples of what people have done prior and the creativity with it to get thoughts going and prove that things can happen with enough momentum and work
- Work moves at the speed of trust (samantha after tatiana)
 - Brian
 - Trust is so important
 - Don't assume you know where people are starting
 - Have resources where people can call in and get some help - looked to see if there was anyone out there who had made curriculum, but there wasn't much on the phone unlike other technology
 - At least 25% haven't contacted cell phones and need that help
 - How to learn? Listen
 - Had deep learning discussion about reentry and the tech relationship which helped learn was to be more inclusive and helped build trust
 - People want to know that you care and that their opinions matter
 - Its not easy esp for previously incarcerated individuals to open up so trust is so important

Questions & Answers

- To Don but also everyone: when trying to collaborate and write grants with educational institutions it comes at a hefty price (is it community colleges? They've worked with big names in UNC system) - are there any creative ways that nonprofits can still collaborate with colleges without the high cost?
 - Sma Graham
 - If letters are sent before, NCSU cant send overhead

- Don
 - Have a come to Jesus meeting and get it all on the table so that you don't waste your time
 - Can only speak to community colleges - each is run differently, so get everything you want on the table to find the best pick
 - Have your method of operation already written so that there are no questions and it is all out there
- Need a guide sheet for how to talk about digital inclusion (vocabulary barrier) (***couldn't really hear her and so I am not sure about the questions/statements. I think it was more comments than questions, so this can be ignored? I also feel so bad that I couldn't understand her***)
 - Don
 - Focus on procurement - there were questions on a checklist that are changing - need folks from the state to add training in there and look at all groups and verify that there is a plan to train
 - Tatiana
 - Anticipated pushback so its almost like telling people what they would relate with
 - Picks the numbers she wants them to know - different delivery to get to the same goal
 - Having broad examples and then dial in on what specific thing that the people want to hear
 - Have informed conversations with data to back it up (Samantha S.)
- To Don: can you give an example of the metrics you use to track your digital equity
 - Don
 - Offer north star basic skills which isnt the best but has provided quick insight and ability to teach
 - Find out what it is the clients really want
 - Get the transcript which is your evidence and go forth from that as a good starting point
- To Tatiana: how do you wrangle the funding groups with so many counties as every town/county has there own groups and is distinct
 - Tatiana
 - There are so many groups and differences and
 - Didn't want to do individual plans as it would be a lot of the same and focused on county profiles
 - Lots of engagement was supported by local gov but not the local gov itself
 - There would be lots in one county but none in another
 - It is a living document
 - It is important to continue the conversations and continuing it within the counties and happen organically

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Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- It is easy to feel disconnected but it pays off to connect people together and continue the conversation
- Continues to engage with each county and connect over things that they see happen in their county
- The initial meeting with mind mapping activity - they wrote down extra emails so she back tracked to make sure she didn't go to spam - one direct personal connections can help make the connections even better and stronger
- Samantha
 - Asset mapping can help you be able to see what organizations you should contact and how to keep working with partners across the are you are wanting to connect with
- Have any of you used private sector funding from local businesses/private sector partnerships
 - Sam G.
 - Lots of private sector connections with BAND NC, everyone understood that they had to find the partner they wanted to fund (BANDNC = intermediate)
 - Brian
 - Have some
 - Have an annual event that is funded by local corporations
 - In kind donations from private sector groups
 - How can you leverage every avenue
 - In the justice space, lots of law firm have provided money which is really interesting
 - Can invoice adult corrections for some of the things they do
 - Nonprofits think that people have to give money, but you can provide a service that people will pay you for
 - Receive lots of funding through contracts with adult corrections
 - Don
 - We have rules and regulations, so that has to go through different channels
- Comment: cross department connections to create a coalition to help promote digital equity and use a layered approach to continue helping grantees continue doing their work → really good convo on how to help those who are being missed because they don't fit a particular narrative

Implementing Digital Skills Programming Breakout

- **Moderator:**
 - **Kenny Sherin (NCSU Cooperative Extension)**
- **Speakers:**



- **Dr. Doris Carver (NCCS Digital Navigator Project)**
- **Mira Sampath (Office of Rural Health HIIT Team)**
- **Michael Terrell (Per Scholas)**
- **Hannah Bradley (NCSU Cooperative Extension)**
- **Ashley Cummings (NCSU Cooperative Extension)**

- 14 locations funded by Digital Skills [grant](#)
- Partnerships include United Way 211, Grow with Google, NC Works and many others.
- Mobile classroom: one for each county. Includes mac book chairs, wireless mice, power adapters and cables, power strips, routers, projectors, HDMI's, battery packs, etc. Let's them meet people where they are at.
- Provided 1,000+ people with digital skills education in just 9 months
- Doris Carver (NCCCS): For Tier 1 and 2 counties, serve 20 pilot colleges (eventually will be statewide to all community colleges and then eventually anyone can take it). 16 hour on-line Digital Navigator Essentials Certification course. Offered in English and Spanish. Cohort 1 is already taking place. The second cohort is coming up in July. There is an increase in ESL students in some colleges. There are badges for different classes like digital literacy. There 8 modules. They are also offering classes in prisons.

Counties served by the NCCCS Digital Navigator community colleges

Community College	Tier 1 and Tier 2 Counties Served
Alamance CC	Alamance
Beaufort County CC	Beaufort Hyde Tyrrell Washington
Catawba Valley CC	Catawba Alexander
Cleveland CC	Cleveland
College of the Albemarle	Camden Chowan Currituck Dare Gates Pasquotank Perquimans
Craven CC	Craven
Davidson-Davie CC	Davidson
Forsyth Technical CC	Stokes



Isothermal CC	Rutherford Polk
Lenior CC	Greene Jones
Martin CC	Martin Bertie
McDowell Tech CC	McDowell
Nash CC	Nash
Pamlico CC	Pamlico
Robeson CC	Robeson
South Piedmont CC	Anson Union
Southeastern CC	Columbus
Western Piedmont CC	Burke
Wilkes CC	Wilkes Ashe Alleghany
Wilson CC	Wilson

- [Per Scholas](#) offers 12-15 week, tuition-free, full-time courses with graduate certifications that prepare students for entry-level to mid-level roles. It's a lot of work, but relatively low risk.
- NC Cooperative Extension offers groups settings but also one-on-one meetings. Can even travel to them and meet them at a community location. Some of these sessions are also peer-learning where the participants learn and share with one another.
- From Per Scholas: Google and Social Finance partnership can get a loan of \$3,000 and don't have to pay it back until they make \$45,000 (and most make \$21/hour). Allows students to leave a current job to take classes full-time and move on to higher wage jobs. 2023 Emerging Issues Forum participant speaker testimonials [here](#).
- The Friday Institute at NCSU has a whole team looking at the impact of AI on K-12 education.
- Good classes on digital skills: [GCF Global](#), [LinkedIn Learning](#), [Senior Planet](#)
 - [Northstar Digital Literacy](#) - every public library has free access to the platform

Starting and Sustaining Projects Panel

- **Moderator:**



- **Sara Nichols (Land-of-Sky Regional Council)**
- **Speakers:**
 - **Ashley Smith (E2D)**
 - **Yvette Brooks (Through the Trees)**
 - **Shalondra Greenlee (NC Counts Coalition)**
 - **Peter Michelen (Hispanic Federation)**
- Moderator: Sara Nichols
 - 17 years in government with all of the days being grant funded
 - Don't live in a gov space with taxpayers funding it
 - Key to it was innovation
 - Listened to the community to meet the needs
 - There are gaps in gov centers and we can fill them in
 - Gov center is to figure out where the gaps are and help with them
 - Leverage tons of money for infrastructure and received none of the funding for profit
 - It's about community reputation and leading
 - From over 75% to less than 15% without connectivity in Madison county without gigabit fiber in that county
 -
- Grassroots movers, having a moment becoming a movement with the digital divide
- They are all new to the digital world, but they said yes to doing something in their community
- Yvette Brooks
 - Based out of Transylvania county, through the trees
 - Refurbish devices, technology support, digital literacy, broadband expansion
 - Help with internet subsidies, based off of NC light survey (first program)
 - Important to keep the branches of their nonprofit as some funding has paused
 - They have a shop that people can purchase technology in, profits help support their other services in their company
 - Looking for a new space and open a shop in Hendersonville
 - Been working with school kids at two different programs, had 16 kids learn how to refurbish devices, teach it to the kids level and not just left up to people who have done it for years
- Shalondra Greenlee
 - NC COunts Coalition, nonprofit based out of raleigh but statewide, support 130 community based organizations, intermediary for funding for those organizations
 - Large gap for census across the state for individuals accessing the internet
 - Work is done with collaborative approach, focus not just on gov or partners want but what is the need of the community organizations they work with
 - The needs of the people are heard and can move in the work they want to move in

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Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Biggest key for them is that they are built off of trust, their community based organizations have built a large trust and they let the gov and big organizations know that that trust will not be broken
- Coalitions are community based
- They look at the very local grass roots level and go from bottom to top
- Host monthly conversations on digital equity and its growth in NC
- Peter Michelen
 - Hispanic federation, improve latino families through latino institutions that serve on the community level
 - Focus on digital skills and workforce development as one unit as most jobs require digital skills nowadays
 - Partner with organizations that have trust of communities to host digital skills workshops
 - Beginner access = how to access the computer, how to create resumes
 - Intermediate skills = administrative skills, use google and word suites
 - Advanced skills = coding languages, don't make sense for every community but there is an offering for individuals
 - Start entrepreneurs, latinos are the biggest growth of entrepreneurs
 - Support immigrants who are starting off behind when coming here since they may not have been exposed to tech or may not have the connections needed
 - Young and senior communities, for future jobs or doctors or voting
 - Economic shift - latinos were in lots of service jobs and least in tech during pandemic, programs are trying to meet the needs and shift the skillsets of the community
 - Job placement as many come wanting to find work, provide programing and assistance
 - Served over 25,000 people with skills training along with other awesome statistics
 - Sad to see ACP go, on a national digital equity campaign, have advocated for the ACP and so they hope it can be replaced or continued in the future to continue to provide services to the community around them
 - Spoke on the spectrum digital education grant opportunity
- Ashley Smith
 - E2D, device refurbishment group
 - Corporate donations of laptops and hire highschool and college students to do the work in multiple labs that they have
 - Gave out 45,000 devices over the past years
 - Been able to hone in on ability to refurbish devices and have the digital access through mecklenburg county
 - Want to bring it the the western part of the state
 - They know they can't meet the need completely, so excited to continue to work with other statewide groups

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Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Train students on the job on how to refurbish the computers and then give them out to the community at little to no cost
- Question: what are some of the risks you took and how are you looking at sustainability for your organizations?
 - Yvette
 - Had a good full time paying job and stepped into the volunteer space to get started, now paid but not everyone gets to do that
 - Started out small, build off of that and keep it going
 - There is so much need out there and everyone needs help, if you set yourself up wrong that is not a good way to build
 - Shalondra
 - Have failed forward and also understand the power of collaborative work, especially in nonprofit center where it can get very tribal and you don't want people to step in your lane
 - Collaboration can lead to more funding, can't be afraid to fail forward
 - Create more diverse portfolio for your organization and help your community
 - Peter
 - Collaboration is very important, there isn't a guaranteed plan for sustainability
 - Trying to be an intermediary and collaborate with groups across the country
 - Ashley
 - Sustainability looks like trying to lay groundwork for infrastructure to come
 - Had an opportunity to grow a location even without being able to fill it, expanded to continue to fill the space and use it in the future
 - It can be scary to infrastructure build, but with preparation they are trying to inspire more device building across north carolina
- Question: where do you see people in programs getting stuck in digital inclusion in the space you have gone deep in
 - Ashley
 - Seen themes today about how tech is changing at a fast pace, place where people may get hung up on
 - Build a program just for things to change, so have intentional flexibility in planning to help with things changing in the future
 - Paying for services has seen great success with individuals having skin in the game
 - Need to for the economic growth, so charging has worked well for them
 - Peter
 - Lots of the community organizations have just a couple of people in the organization so they have lots of roles and are stretched thin and it can be hard to think about long term sustainability

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Building a New Digital Economy in NC

- Articulating that their programs are digital equity programs, to recognize and articulate right so that they can sustain their programs
- Shalondra
 - A reality of change, may be consistent change in sustainability
 - Thinking back, it took years for cell phones to get a 100 million users, less than a year ago we got introduced to AI and chat boxes and it took less than 90 days to see 100 million users for that technology
 - For them, sustainability isn't a written plan but the ability to be flexible, it speaks volumes to understanding
 - Still looking for ways to layer networks and partnerships and open doors to different types of funding to make sure that the community will be served
- Yvette
 - Paying attention to the needs in the area
 - Just been trying to run to keep up with the exponential growth of each thing added, but pulled in so many directions so the sustainability is important to save space for yourself each day so you can continue in that work
- Questions and Answer Section
 - Share of any organizations that are working to increase access to computers in a creative way with young people?
 - Yvette - connect with afterwards
 - Ashley - connect with afterwards
 - CDE? To learn about groups in Charlotte, digby bridge and dotty road?
 - Lots of training for kids with digital divide
 - With the census, are people responding to the American community surveys? And do you gather any data useful for state planning or anymore granular data?
 - Shalandra
 - Work in partnership with other organizations to get information that they collected and get specific reports from them
 - Looking at the outcomes of the survey and share the information with their organizations who can share it with their communities
 - Work with national partners to make sure that the information is explained and how it affects programs that they are working on

Building a Robust Digital Inclusion Ecosystem Fireside Chat

- **Speakers:**
 - **Bruce Clark (Center for Digital Equity)**
 - **Amy Huffman (NDIA)**



- Shoutouts to great work being done in the room and across NC
- Why are we doing this work? What is something else for which we do this work?
 - Upward mobility
 - Opportunity for doing what one wants to do
 - Fairness until everyone has access to broadband
- Who in your community (define how you want) gets paid to wake up each day and think about the digital equity system?
 - This is rhetorical
 - It may be you, or someone told to do it, or no one
- We are trying to create opportunities no matter what people want to do
- Wants to share what they think of as a digital equity ecosystem in the region
 - Built off of ten years of failing and trying to get to today
 - Advocacy
 - Broad term
 - Trust building and planning process
 - Where public, private, and residents come together to make solutions
 - Helps communities address and document
 - Playbook/strategic plans
 - Helps communities address and document the adoption efforts
 - What are people receiving
 - Adoption
 - Takes plan and brings it to life
 - Figure out the best pathway for you through digital navigator service
 - Data/resources
 - Movement of information and the ecosystem built produces data
 - Data is so important because it is what residents are saying they need, what languages they need, are provided services effective, where are people calling from
 - Data feeds back into advocacy efforts which helps improve the plan for the next year
- Success measurements that equal sustainability
 - Mindset: do the leaders in your communities understand the connections around digital equity?
 - Support networks: do the places where people go for help know what digital resources are available?
 - Infrastructure: do you have the back office resources/admin to operationalize the ecosystem?
- Sustainability is follow the money back to the plans, and does the local government or entities plans talk about digital equity and how does it show up in the plans
- This leads back to the digital inclusion plan! Do your plans talk about digital equity?
- Human infrastructure - we need people to do the work

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- We also need policy! That good policy enables the work - local, state, federal. And that those policies do not hinder progress, but enable it
- Advocacy isn't a dirty word! It is about talking about why this work matters and helps people thrive
- How do you organize/grow the size of your coalitions?
 - We need to welcome people into this field! Through partnership and collaboration
 - Constant learning from people on the ground
 - Need opportunities for people of all skill sets to help across the board
- How many times do you go in and people complain about how to learn powerpoint and skills?
 - It has a higher meaning of needing a job to support families and improve family outcome than just a digital skill
 - Connecting with someone's personal why
- People outside of the sphere of influence, like government, is about economic or workforce development, and generally about
- This work is so connected to future economy
- How do we bring the conversation back to everyone who can influence this conversation because many hands make light work and going at it together is a better solution
- Question: what conversation are we having around disruptive or changing forces around our work like political pushback or AI or ACP?
 - ACP
 - Real and devastating loss of the ACP
 - Now we are going back to patchwork solution with no national solution
 - Keep fighting for the national broadband solution
 - There is a new bill in legislature that is being championed in congress by those who want to see this program continue
 - The financials of the situation are yet to be determined, she is not super optimistic for a solution prior to the election
 - AI
 - Looking at the future, generative AI is front in center as how we think about it as an industry and what role it could play in digital equity ecosystem and how it could affect headcount by replacing roles that you maybe can't afford to pay
 - Whose job is it to wake up every day and make sure all communities are in a position to take advantage of AI and not be taken advantage of
 - It's a scary but exciting opportunity for this community to take advantage of generative AI
 - Who else is as close to the community we serve
 - Have conversations with residents for support with AI to help with resume writing, about to deliver a workshop about this and how to use it to job search with AI

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- The internet has always had the ability to be the great equalizer of our generation (schooling, businesses, healthcare) and yet because of the digital divide it has just double downed on existing divides and disparities
- If we don't get in the game it can further hurt these divides
- She has her head in the sand as well when it comes to technology, but can't do that with AI and need to learn to use it to help others learn how to use it and scale these divides
- Questions and Answers
 - couldn't hear question because they weren't mic'd up
 - That's why we have to get in the game because these systems are being created by those who created the bias systems that already exist today
 - Anything that involves humans will have bias
 - We have an opportunity to avail that to the community as they learn to use the AI programs that are already out there
 - Not to train people on each one but on the framework you should use when working on them/using them
 - You want to know as a user where each program trends/leans and as a community we should be able to educate people on this
 - Community colleges has policies on generative AI, so reach out to them so that you can have a session or seminar to learn about it so you don't have to reinvent the wheel/start at ground zero
 - Great suggestion
 - Rip and duplicate
 - Don't need to recreate the wheel but look to these organizations in our ecosystem to understand the landscape and know who has what capabilities to do what part of the work and to go from there so that we are not working harder but working smarter
 - How do we incorporate supporting organizations that are still providing in person assistance in our digital equity plans
 - Hitting on idea of the intrinsic value of doing things together face to face even in our digital equity circles
 - We over index on phone support in the pandemic and now we have people out in the community doing the work which builds relationships
 - We can put it into the data to show the results of doing things in person and show where they want funding to go to continue to build the trust with individuals
 - We specifically built a program for caregivers of school aged children to be better advocates for their children
 - Storytime: parent came in and navigated through portals and saw child's grades which weren't what the child was reporting back, we may chuckle but think about the outcome of the kids life because they empowered a caring and loving parent to learn something

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Building a New Digital Economy in NC

new and hard and now has information that the parent can help the child now that they have more information

- Regarding telehealth, schools are getting grants and so they are having people come to schools via online, this is happening at colleges and so you can ask those programs to ask about those programs
- Semi Futuristic question: thought about autonomy, about whether you wanna pursue schooling or a job or what to do with your time and think about how AI got so many users and was adopted so much faster, just thinking about the extractive nature of the internet. IS this a conversation that is being had? Do you see a decentralized alternative that benefits the user and not the large corporation? Especially when it comes to security, safety and privacy especially with data
 - First instinctual response is that this is what government should be doing, they should regulate this industry and get on it quickly
 - Seen lots of bills over AI around the state houses
 - Back to advocacy, this is why we have to do what we are doing today by building relationship and stay in the know on the state to country level so we know what decisions are being made on our behalf maybe even without our input
 - Corporations may listen to us to but policy makers are elected to represent us in government
 - Point to final slides, the idea of self sufficiency
 - We aren't telling people what to use it for but creating pathways for them to get there
 - The idea of self sufficiency is rooted in digital equity
 - In the way we operationalize that in our ecosystem, in advocacy one of the areas of focus is policy
 - We go and develop policy agenda created by individuals who represent the covered populations
 - Create a peoples policy agenda that includes very similar things that you are talking about
 - This tells us that the community is interested in learning more about these topics
 - The things that matter in the community then show up into our plans
- To talk about funding, there is a [timeline slide for digital equity act funding](#)
- The point to the story is get ready right now
- They have been planning and now it is time to go
- Funding comes this fall at the latest by september 28, it might be earlier
- If you aren't ready to apply by then you will probably have to wait another year
- Figure out who is doing what because this is a bucket for everyone across the country
- It will be big awards with hub and spoke model where they will most likely give out awards to big entities who then subgrant to smaller groups
- Don't know all guidelines yet, but there is enough to start identifying

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- It should elevate and build up the programs in the state
- Its go time, money is coming, it's time to do the work and you all are the right people to do the work or if not you find a groups of people who are
- How do we be a welcoming community and create some fairness and grow the ecosystem but not have to restart every time someone new comes into the room
- There is momentum that needs to be build so how do we bring people in without having to restart the process
- It's about agile iteration
- Build on what you have already built over the last several years
- Make sure you can pivot if needed to help yourself to change course direction to keep doing the work with these funds
- The funding is here but make sure that you know it is not a magic spigot to be used forever, so make sure that we are working to help the future long term
- Shouldn't have all this money and nothing to show for it in the next five years