

BCN Advisory Council
Regular Meeting, June 28, 2007
Minutes

DRAFT

Attendees: Tim Schell, Jay Jaeger, Paul Nelson, Gordon Hanson, Matthew Rains, Mike Mietz, Bob Bocher, Connie Bandt, Brian Raemer, Elena Pokot (phone), Randy Corough (phone), Jamie Poindexter, Barry Golden

Oskar Anderson / DET

Discussion: Oskar Anderson, Administration, DOA Division of Enterprise Technologies (DET) provided a brief introduction of his general awareness of BCN. He indicated that he has only been in the State CIO role for four months, and has had, as we all know, to pay attention to a lot of various priority activities. He has visited the BCN NOC (Norlight), and has had some discussions with others regarding BCN, but does not yet consider himself “up to speed”.

After that, the group went around the table, introduced themselves, and provided some perspective on the state of BCN, with the following items captured in the minutes:

- BCN is the largest MPLS network that we know of, consisting of a very diverse stakeholders
- BCN works well, the implementation was smooth given the size of the project
- DOA staff has done well, and their efforts are appreciated
- Given the amount of time it took to go thru the process of WCNI and procurement, it seems that pretty soon we should start looking to plan the next generation network
- Interactions between BCN, costs and subsidies are important to educational institutions with respect to access and revenue guarantees
- The UW representative observed that while there have been some “battles” at times, but what we have has been working quite well. He also observed that the conversion was well managed – a lot of effort was put into it.
- Collaboration among a group of educational, DOA and state agency representatives started working on WCNI as back as far as 2001, so it would behoove us to start thinking about the future.

- Bandwidth presents issues at times – some library and school circuits are undersized. Should we look at cost of bandwidth as compared to what can be gotten in metro areas for significantly less cost? So we then have institutions adding capacity via other providers, which cause management issues. These are more policy issues than operational issues, but if the end rates are not competitive we lose customers, which creates revenue issues for the contract.
- This is something we do have to look at. The contract is 5 year with 5 1-year extensions. “Recasting” the contract would take about a year. Now there are more options: DSL, Charter. (Editorial Note: Some will recall that elements of DSL and Charter were identified by some vendors during the RFI).
- There are also quality advantages to having dedicated network facilities (copper, fiber tail circuits), of course, but if the delta gets too large over other options, BCN will not attract those partners.
- Bandwidth, and (lack of) subsidies are an issue for non-K12s as well.
- State agencies have generally found BCN to be pretty reliable, though fiber cuts have been a problem at times.
- The Technical College Representative indicated that generally the experience has been positive. They have been pleased with the video quality and the reliability of the network. Getting folks trained was not extremely painful. Data: “it just gets there”.
- These comments seem to align with other comments received.
- Collaboration was a critical success factor in getting the best solution we could at the time.

DOA / TEACH Discussion – Gordon Hanson

- Gordon Hanson: Provided handout (sent along with these minutes)
- Overview of subsidy amounts from TEACH (\$17.2 Million total). K12 represents somewhat more than \$12 Million of that. (More detail is available in the handout for this meeting and the previous BCN meeting, and is not recorded here).
- It was observed that the legislation was written around 1996 technology, but technology since changed. We have to try and fit as best we can within statutory language, as best we can, with “tweaks” to the language.

TEACH Voice Over IP (VoIP) Discussion

- The main question is how does VoIP fit in with the statutory language of TEACH
- Gordon Hanson indicated that he has been thinking about issues for several months, but is still working to convert the TEACH budgeting, etc. to BCN, so time for thought on policy has been constrained. There are also LAB audits in progress, and E-Rate audits which also are time consuming. It is also nearly the end of the FY, a very busy time.
- There have also been discussions within DOA on these issues. The main issue is to preserve the integrity of the instructional aspect of the TEACH program.
- One issues stem from the fact VoIP has high QoS, which raises issues with respect to impacting the network performance for instructional use.
- There are also questions about what protocols are used for what. However, generally the group seems to feel that this is not a significant factor.
- PSC administrative rules designed to restrict the use of network facilities funded via TEACH subsidies may also be a factor.
- Are there any TEACH board policies which are a factor?
- The question was asked whether or not VoIP in these situations could function adequately without QoS? Or, could we tunnel the VoIP or otherwise constrain the bandwidth so as to ensure that the educational mission of the subsidized network is not jeopardized.
- Because educational institutions are working on their budgets, and the E-Rate cycle, sufficient lead time is desirable. Even if the decision is that TEACH subsidized BCN circuits cannot be used for VoIP, it is desirable to resolve that as soon as possible.
- There was some discussion as to whether or not DOA or the Advisory Council should approach the legislature about modifications. It was observed that doing a major overhaul of the legislation is more likely to result in unintended consequences than doing small fixes or “tweaks”, so a major overhaul probably is not the first choice. However, if necessary it is one possible approach.
- If issues exist with one source of funds (e.g. TEACH due to the issues mentioned earlier) that does not mean that other sources of funds could not be used (e.g. E-Rate), though of course the level of subsidy would be different. The issues here are really only present for TEACH subsidized circuits.

- Federal (FCC) rules seem to allow VoIP, creating lots of requests for information. The FCC has also avoided worrying about higher levels in protocol stack. If one considers VoIP that way, it is really just a different application.
- VoIP can itself used for education? Why should we be deciding for folks? It was also observed, however, that if an organization decides to go VoIP, it would be for their entire operation, not just the instructional facets.
- DOA is also looking to create additional funding for TEACH outside of the Universal Service Fund.
- Several members expressed their willingness to participate in discussions with DOA

Web Site for BCN – Jay Jaeger

- Jay gave a brief update on mailing list. Information on the mailing list may be found at <https://lists.uwex.edu/mailman/listinfo/bcnac> .
- Jay also provided a brief update on the web site, located at <http://www.doa.state.wi.us/badgernet> . Agenda, Minutes and other documents are currently being posted there.
- Discussion of collaborative facilities (Moodle)
 - WiscNet, who would provide Moodle for free. But WiscNet is also an ISP under the contract. Would this create any problems? The general consensus was that while it would not be any real conflict of interest, it was probably better to avoid doing so.
 - It was also observed that Moodle was really designed as an instructional system, and while it might be adequate to the task, perhaps something better could be found.
 - Several members indicated that they would like to see something more collaborative. (Notices of postings to web site, for example)
 - The question was raised if there were options could DOA offer. Jay indicated that WEAT had asked to have something established, but that the first attempt was generally not found to be satisfactory. Jay also indicated that he felt that the state agencies had an unmet need for collaborative facilities.
 - There was also a discussion about the possibility of locating another stakeholder that isn't an ISP that could host a collaborative site. Jamie Poindexter indicated that ICS is looking into some possibilities and may be able to provide a service at some point.

- One issue with the previous attempt to use Sharepoint was that without the portal feature, managing accounts was not easily done. Sharepoint with the portal feature might work.
- Communicating out to the customer groups is also an issue. Right now, that takes a lot of manual intervention, with all that that implies (delays, etc.). Having a subscription facility might be helpful.
- There was also discussion (during the BCN update) of whether or not the BCN Advisory Council could do some kind of call in session, or find other ways to ensure that the various constituencies were aware of their representatives on the Council.

Mike Mietz – BCN Update

- Mike provided a Powerpoint presentation prepared for the last BCN users group update. (Sent along with these minutes). The meeting was quite well attended – 3 full conference rooms.
- Norlight has been acquired by KDL, which is of some concern.
- The BCN Core continues in good shape. Aggregation links have needed increases at times.
- Because of how BCN has been implemented, there have been some cases where, perhaps unbeknownst to the customer, customers have in fact had more bandwidth available than they had contracted for. This is of some concern to the customers, because it may skew the results of tests and future planning and lead to unpleasant future surprises; it is naturally also of some concern to the vendor, AT&T. DOA and AT&T are investigating the issue and possible remedies, including moving to use shaping (rather than “policing” which can drop packets).
- Fiber cuts are more of a problem than they had been in the past
- There was also a handout of an email from John Siemering at NWTC expressing gratitude for support received regarding resolution of some HPLL performance issues.
- There was discussion as to whether someone could do user group meetings for other customer groups? DOA is willing, but is not in a really good position to organize them. Perhaps a good time would be after the budget passes, as the interest may be higher at that time. Otherwise, generally, there may not be extremely high levels of interest.
- Road show to CESAs coming up. Would be good to let BCN members know, so they could attend these road show sessions.