

San Luis Valley Regional Broadband Collaborative

San Luis Valley Regional Leadership Committee (SLV RLC) | Community Resource Center
Broadband Technical Steering Committee (BTSC) | SLV Development Resources Group



Internet/Broadband Accessibility is a Critical Community Need

“My access is fairly good, but for many of those we serve it is not, or they do not have access. **We had to provide internet to over 100 families in our community so that they could access their education, and few resources were available for that.** In addition, with the increase in those accessing service, the overall service in the area has struggled and gone out several times.”

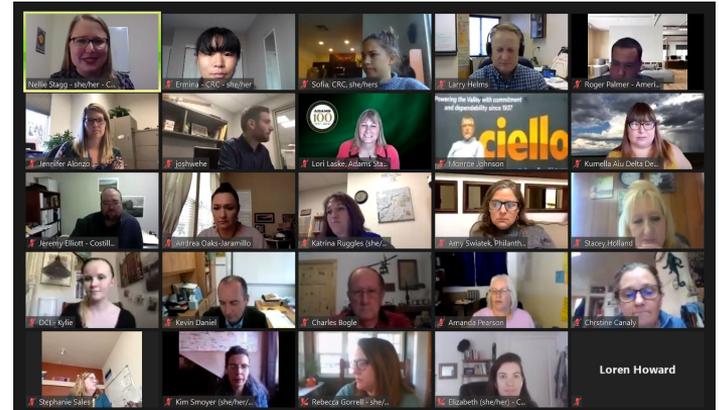
“**We need to work toward a Valley-wide Broadband network.** This is a non-negotiable need for larger companies.”

**Responses from the 2020 San Luis Valley Regional Nonprofit Needs Assessment*

Regional Collaboration Broadband Summit - October 2020

- The perspectives of 50+ diverse community members were lifted, including Adams State University, SLV BOCES, Valley-wide Health Systems, state and local government officials, and local Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

From this event the regional broadband collaborative emerged - as well as the need for dedicated broadband staffing for the region.



Previous Efforts of the Broadband Technical Steering Committee

2017 San Luis Valley Regional Broadband Strategic Plan, Key Takeaways:

- First, broadband services in the valley are inadequate.
- Next, the low population density, economic factors, and geography of the region make achieving broadband development objectives difficult.
- Finally, collaboration between various broadband development efforts is required to overcome the barriers to development.

Due to a lack of widespread public demand and insufficient cross-sector collaboration, active committees ceased making progress on issues of broadband in 2017.

San Luis Valley
Regional Broadband Strategic Plan
Ver. 1: 7 May 2017

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<https://www.slvdrgr.org/research-data/san-luis-valley-broadband-strategic-plan/>

The Role of Nonprofits as Creative Bridge Builders

TECHNOLOGY

Students disappeared from classes when they lost internet. A rural Colorado school district's creativity got them back online.

Alamosa School District saw no end to the growing digital divide, as parents lost jobs. Then the community came together for a temporary solution.



Tamara Chuang 4:30 AM MST on Jan 7, 2021



Alamosa School District's administration building, pictured on Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020. The rural Colorado district has close to 2,150 students. (Erica Breunlin, The Colorado Sun)



- The SLV has a strong regional history of collaborative, responsive, and creative nonprofits.
- When nonprofits have a seat at the table, we can build bridges between the community, government, and business to find solutions, even to our most complicated challenges.
- Dedicated capacity is required to meaningfully engage with communities, especially those that lack the support of local government or may be unaware of the significance of their digital needs.

Additional Capacity Required to Advance Regional Digital Equity

We are witnessing a surge in state and federal funding for rural broadband infrastructure, and increased private interest in large-scale fiber projects.

- However communities must first have the capacity to access these funds and opportunities.

For rural communities with limited local capital, this is a systemic barrier to accessing the funds designed to serve them in the first place.

- Broadband infrastructure and digital equity is complex, multi-stakeholder work.

Where the SLV's collaborative efforts have struggled in the past has been in not having the funding to support dedicated positions that advance this collaborative work.

wiley

ALERT | December 29, 2020

Congress Provides Nearly \$7 Billion in New Broadband Funding in the Latest COVID-19 Stimulus Legislation

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Proposal for SLV Broadband Services Manager and Broadband Community Relations Manager

The RFP was designed off of best practices learned from other rural regional collaboratives

- Open to individuals or a firm with the technical knowledge, local connections, cultural competency, and fund development skills needed to succeed in the roles

Two bodies of work:

- **1 FTE Broadband Services Manager** (technical expert, private-public sector engagement)
- **1 FTE Broadband Community Relations Manager** (digital equity expert, community outreach and engagement)

Proposal for SLV Broadband Services Manager and Broadband Community Relations Manager

Housed within San Luis Valley Council of Governments, these individuals/firms will work together to develop projects using a community-driven process:

- Identify short and long-range projects, with emphasis on those that will expand access to the region's most geographically isolated and underserved communities;
- Arrange meetings with ISPs and broadband stakeholders and attend meetings locally or regionally as needed;
- Generate revenue sources to sustain broadband management and possible projects, including coordinating the preparation of broadband grant applications;
- Work with the SLV RLC to lead public outreach and education, identify local community champions, and create community feedback processes;
- Center regional broadband efforts using a digital equity lens.

Three Phase Plan Rooted in Digital Equity

1. Initial seed investment to build capacity in the region

- While there is ample funding for eligible projects, the SLV needs funding for the capacity required to develop these projects strategically and inclusively.
- Centralized leadership through the new Broadband Services Manager and Broadband Community Relations Manager positions are imperative to successfully coordinate this cross-sector work.

2. Middle mile infrastructure project funding to build and strengthen the regional network

- Accessing state and federal sources to fund project management and execution, with supplemental funding when required.
- Retaining community ownership of this infrastructure lowers consumer cost and nurtures healthy competition.

3. Last mile infrastructure project funding to expand broadband access into homes

- By subsidizing middle mile infrastructure costs through government investment, we can work with ISPs to then receive last mile funding bringing quality internet to underserved neighborhoods and homes.

Members of the Regional Broadband Collaborative

San Luis Valley RPD Regional Leadership Committee Community Resource Center	
Aaron Miltenberger	Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club of the San Luis Valley
Lupita Garcia	Business Office Manager, Energy Resource Center
Amanda Pearson	Development Director, La Puente Home
Lori Laske	Alamosa County Commissioner District 1
Stephanie Sales	Bookkeeper, South Central Colorado Seniors
Nellie Stagg	Senior Program Director, Community Resource Center
Broadband Technical Steering Committee San Luis Valley Development Resources Group	
Kevin Daniel	Chief Information Officer, Adams State University
Kevin Wilkins	Executive Director, San Luis Valley Development Resources Group
James Belknap	Information Technology Director, Cities of Monte Vista and Alamosa
Ken Groff	District Technology Director, Upper Rio Grande School District
Brandon Gallegos	Systems Analyst, City of Alamosa

If you are interested in learning more or becoming a partner in this work, please contact Nellie Stagg at stagg@crcamerica.org or Kevin Wilkins at kwilkins@slvdr.org.