

25 Jan 2014

Summary:

All three of the sitting Cable TV Committee members (Karen Favazza Spencer, Geoff Bradford and Robert McGillvray) met with 14 Gloucester residents between 1:30 and 3 PM in the Friend Room at the Sawyer Free Library to discuss current issues with Gloucester telecommunications and to brainstorm what we'd like the Gloucester experience to be in the future. Nine of the residents work from home at least part time. Two residents were Gloucester business owners. Four residents worked in Gloucester, five worked out of town. Six have some technical expertise with Broadband. Nine are considering serving on the committee. Three observers, professional facilitator colleagues of Karen's, were present to assist with the workshop format. Two handouts were provided to the attendees.

The issues centered around the following areas:

1. **Technical:** Slow Internet speeds and short outages challenge the Internet user. Dropped calls, dead zones and power outages impact phone service.
2. **Customer Service - Quality and Credibility:** The consensus was that the technicians who come to our houses are very good, but the people we speak to on the phone are very unpleasant. This seems to be magnified by the time-consuming Comcast phone tree that must be navigated, the long wait times, and the ultimate connection to non-local and even non-US customer service representatives. Additionally, the rates quoted on the phone are rarely if ever the amounts that show up on the bill.
3. **Cost:** In the TV venue, the bundling of stations is frustrating to the consumer who just wants one station a la carte. In the phone venue, paying separately for the phone service, the phone and the modem battery feels like extortion. The Internet consumer, to a certain extent, is willing to pay for the service levels they need, but is outraged when those monies do not deliver a reliable service at levels advertised.
4. **Monopoly:** The perception is that Comcast has a monopoly on telecommunication services in Gloucester. Whether or not that is in fact true is immaterial to the experience of the consumer who is aggravated by poor service, technological limitations, lack of options and cost.

Vision - New Businesses Budding with expanded Broadband: High-tech opportunities and high employment is an overarching goal. Gloucester's recognition as a world class research port with a vibrant marine-industrial economy is an objective. Reliable and high speed data-communications that includes WIFI and affordable a la carte choices for telecommunications delivery in all neighborhoods should be our base line. Credible customer service communications from the vendors and clear city articulation of the local telecom environment can begin now.

Next Steps: The next meeting, Feb 8th, will include telecommunication subject matter experts associated with Gloucester. The final meeting in this discovery series on Feb 22nd will result in an action plan that will further our goals.

Comments: See the following pages for all comments submitted:

Submitted by: Karen Favazza Spencer

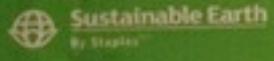
Count	January 25, 2014 - Public Meeting
14	I am a Gloucester resident.
	I am NOT a Gloucester resident.
1	I work at a non-profit.
2	I am a Gloucester business owner.
2	I work for the city, state or federal government.
9	I sometimes use an Internet connection to work from home.
4	I work in Gloucester.
5	I work out of town.
	I am looking for work.
6	I have some technical expertise regarding broadband.
9	I might be interested in becoming a Cable TV Advisory Committee Member.
Non - Participants	
3	Committee Members, Karen Spencer, Geoff Bradford, Bob McGillvray
3	Observers. Professional facilitator friends of Karen's from out of town.

Jan 25, 2014	Session Comments		Session Rating
	I am interested but not committed to being on the board. I already sit on the Harbor Planning Committee.		4.3 on a 1-5 scale 5 being best
	I am very interested in joining the committee! I emailed the mayor Friday, 1/24.		
Question	Why isn't it called the Telecom Committee?		
ToDo	Spread the word to others before the next meeting.		
ToDo	Good basic education on the duties and limitations of the cable advisory committee. Most didn't know what they were about.		
ToDo	Research: BB Access in developing nations.		
ToDo	Propose a city based web page service that explains how to get the most value out of cable AND has community based help.		
	Well organized meeting. Thank you.		
	Very eye opening		
	Sorry we missed the 1st hour.		
	Great interactive meeting.		
ToDo	I'm concerned with expectations of people vs. actual ability of the committee - discouraging.		
	Brain storming excellent. Some excellent ideas.		
	I whole heartedly like this dialogue focus. Thanks		
ToDo	Good session. Feedback: Hard to tell what we're volunteering for.		

Jan 25, 2014	- What's dragging us down?				
	Technology				
	Fiber Backbones around town.				
	No way to delete a specific channel.				
	Technology advancements throughout contract.				
	Storm problems				
	Poor availability				
	Signal issues/levels				
	Slow rollout of new services				
	Performance well below what is advertised				
	Poor equipment				
	Frequent Dropped Calls				
	Lanesville cell dead zones				
	I work from home. I need to stay connected.				
	Bumped offline for 10 minutes at a time when working from home.				
	Phones non-operational if Cable is down.				
	Limited Services				
	Local studio needs upgrade to inspire more local programming.				
	Customer Service - Quality & Credibility				
	Credibility - what the Comcast Rep sells you and what you get billed are two different things.				
	No batteries provided with new modems, then it's \$35 extra to have a battery for your phone.				
	Short life of phone batteries insufficient in event of a power loss.				
	Endless recorded messages to report a problem				
	Customer Service is in the Philippines, should be local.				
	Outsourcing Customer Service when Mass folks are out of work.				
	Poor quality customer service				
	Comcast call wait time when handling issues				
	Techs are fine, but most Comcast employees are unpleasant				
	Monopoly				
	Single provider = monopoly				
	Issues with competition or lack thereof				
	Clear understanding of why Verizon is not available in most of Gloucester				
	Does Comcast control/contract prevent Verizon expansion?				
	What options will allow competition?				
	Cost				
	Too expensive!				
	Not being able to order one station without receiving 70 that I do not want.				
	Price creep - result of lack of competition				
	Need to notify customers about price increases much sooner				
	Equipment rental - rather buy modem than rent for \$7 mo.				
	You have to ask for refunds assoc with 24 hour outage. Should be automatic.				
	Loss of channels every time rates go up.				

Jan 25, 2014	
Questions	Answers
Why isn't it called the Telecom Committee?	Per 1996 Telecom Act, TV, Phone & Internet are regulated separately. State law M.G.L. Chapter 166A requires a city Cable TV Advisory board, and the contract is limited to cable TV service.
Does the contract exclude competition?	The Gloucester contract, like all of Comcast's MA contracts, is non-exclusive and only addresses TV. Any other TV, internet or phone provider is free to compete on Cape Ann.
What does city receive in revenue each quarter?	Per 2007 contract, City receives 1.25% of Comcast Gross Annual Revenue, less fees & assessments. The Gloucester Cable studio is funded with 2% of Comcast's Gross Annual Revenue, less fees & assessments.
How many basic Comcast subscribers are there in Glo?	
Does anyone know what the next newest technology is?	
If our telecommunications was awesome, what would it be?	
How do we best build for today and tomorrow?	
How do we attract tech savvy folks to Gloucester?	
To Do List - Requests from Citizenry	Actions
Spread the word to others before the next meeting.	Will send Letter to the Editor, adding mtg notice to Comcast Channel 6, creating a DL from city website.
Provide basic education on the duties and limitations of the cable advisory committee. Set expectations re actual ability of the committee.	Expanding out the City website regarding the committee and telecom in Gloucester is a good idea! Work in progress.
Would like committee to publish their own detailed explanation of what it would take to allow both Verizon and Comcast to compete in Glo.	Ditto
Propose a city based web page that explains how to get the most value out of cable AND has community based help.	Ditto
Research BroadBand Access in developing nations.	TBD

Attendee Survey

 Sustainable Earth
By Design

Quick Tick Survey
"Who's Here?"

I am a Glou. resident.			
I am NOT a " "			
I work at a NON-PROFIT.			
I am a Glou. business owner.			
I am a government employee.			
I use the Internet to work @home.			
I work in Gloucester.			
I work out of town.			
I am looking for work.			
I have some technical expertise re. Broadband.			
I might be interested in serving on the Committee.			

14 Gloucester residents, plus perhaps 3 or 4 who arrived late and may not have participated in this survey joined the 3 committee members.

Agenda

Cable TV Advisory Committee
Jan 25, 2014

Purpose: Data collection - issues & needs.

AGENDA:

Intro

Growth initiatives in New England

Exercises:

- A. ISSUES - "SAILBOAT"
- B. VISION - "Cover Story"
- C. STAKEHOLDER ID - "CIRCLE of success"

Debrief:

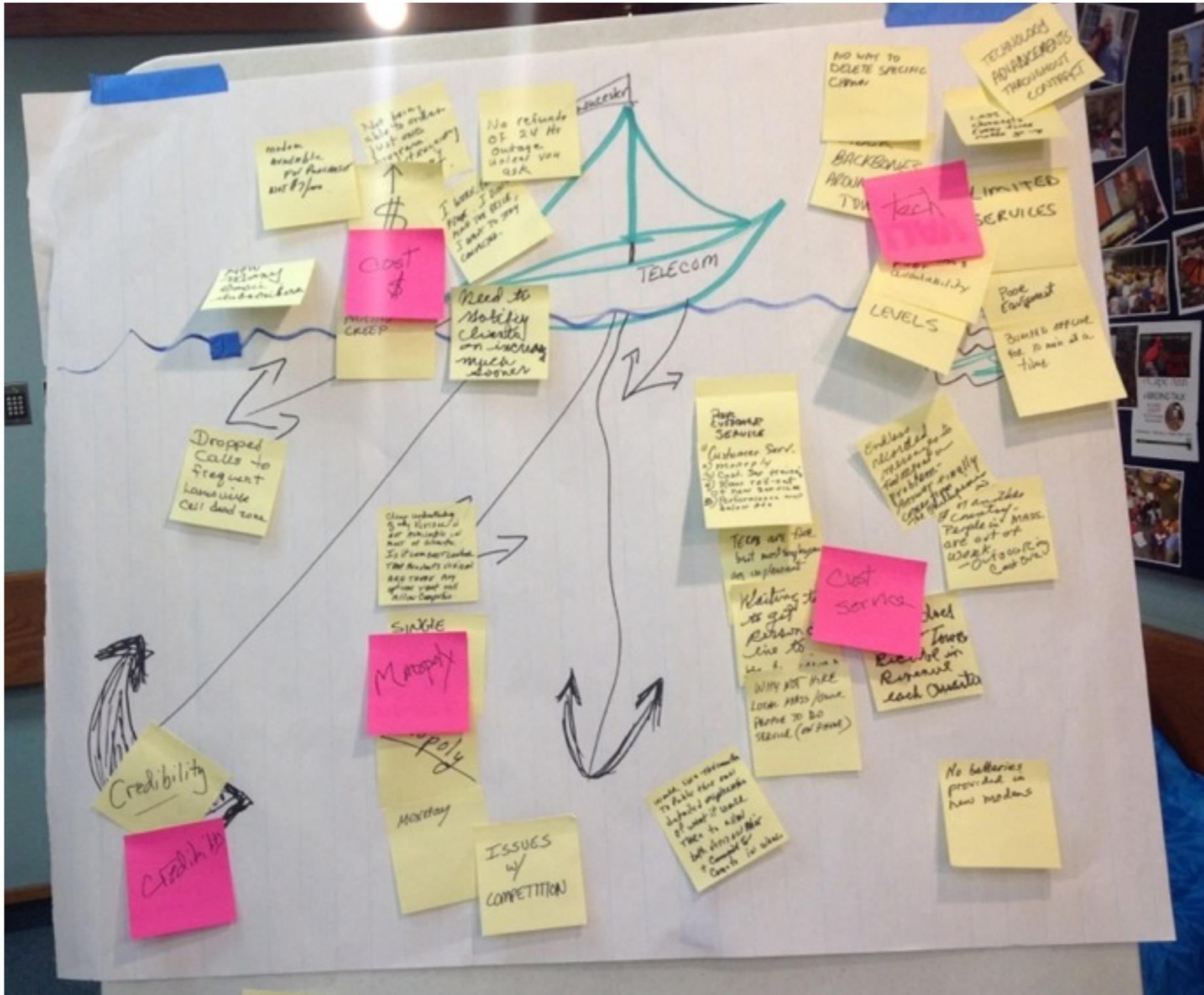
1. ANALYSIS
2. VOLUNTEERS
3. COMMITMENTS

Output: Available in Document Center of city website.

Next: Feb 8th w/ Subject Matter Experts
Feb 22nd Plan next steps.

We ended promptly at 3PM, completing collaborative exercises A & B, and postponing exercise C for another time.

Issues



Sailboat answers “what is slowing us down or dragging us back” and “what reef like obstacles are in our path.”

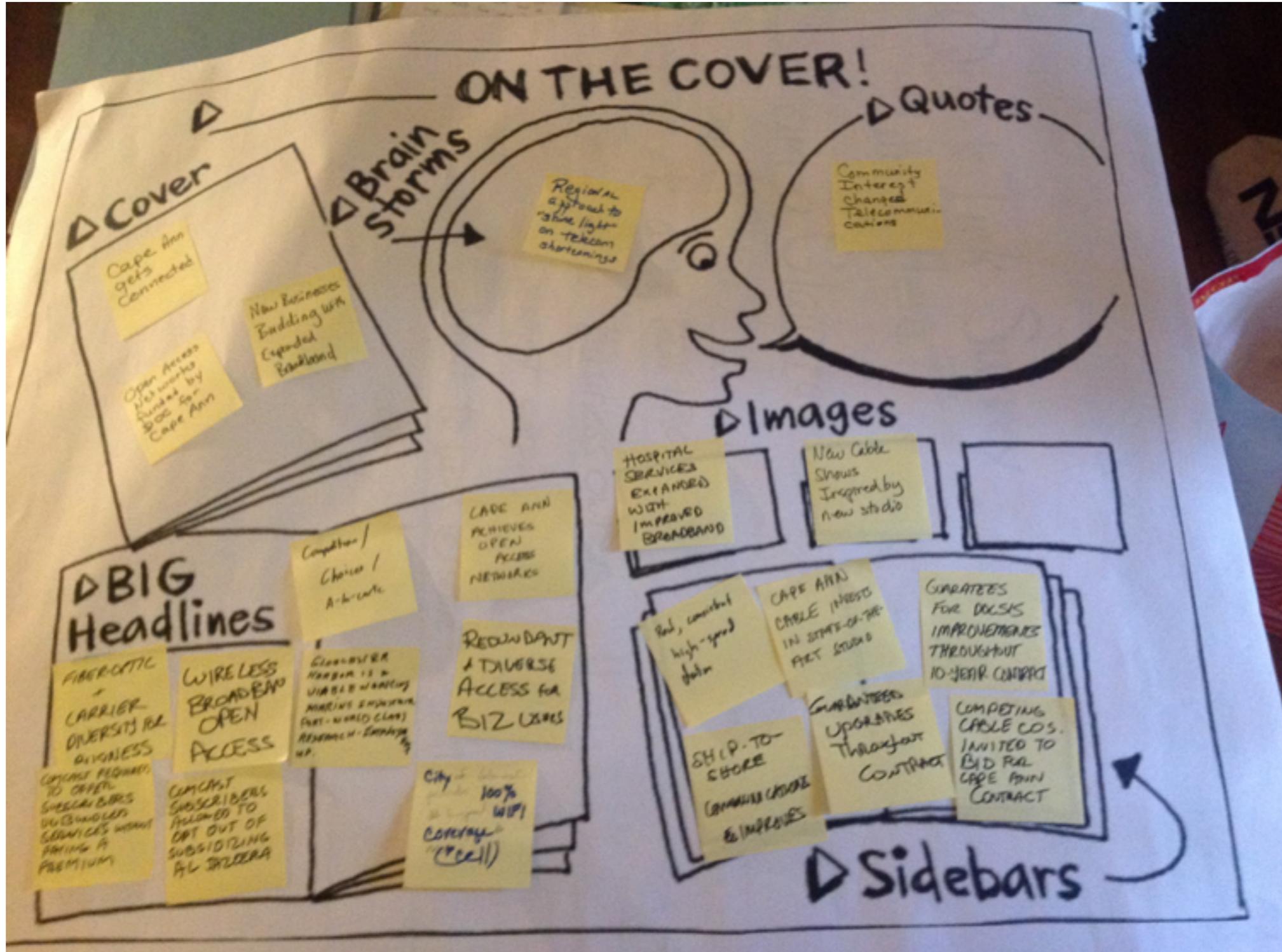
Regional BTOP



Brief review of 4 New England Open Access Broadband initiatives funded in 2010 with hundreds of millions of Federal grants for economic stimulus.

1. Maine 3 Ring Binder
2. Network NH Now
3. Mass 123 through MBI
4. Open Cape

Gloucester Vision



Cover Story answers the question, “what will our story be 3 years from now?”

Information Sheet
Cable TV Advisory Committee
25 Jan 2014

Cable TV Advisory Committee: Required by M.G.L. Chapter 166A to advise and assist the Mayor in performance of the duties and responsibilities vested in the Mayor by law as the licensing authority for cable television franchises in the City. The existing contract renews in March 2017.

To become a committee member, write a letter or email of interest for appointment detailing why you think you are qualified for this position. You will be required to take a Massachusetts Ethics test and be approved by the City Council O&E subcommittee. You must be willing to be available to the citizenry, attend meetings and contribute to the process. Write the Mayor at City Hall or email ckirk@gloucester-ma.gov

Broadband Definition: A high-capacity telecommunications transmission technique using a wide range of frequencies, which enables a large number of messages and data to be communicated simultaneously. Broadband provides access to the highest quality Internet services—streaming media, VoIP (Internet phone), gaming, and interactive services. Quality of service and redundancy, as well as download and upload speed, are required by 21st century business, and therefore are pre-requisite to regional economic development.

Mass Broadband Institute is the state agency that oversees service levels. If you have a complaint, such as a specific poor quality experience, let them know using the Feedback link below.

Broadband Feedback: <http://mapping.massbroadband.org/>

Internet Speed Test: <http://www.speedtest.net/index.php>

Gloucester Committee: <http://gloucester-ma.gov/index.aspx?nid=91>

Regional Broadband Initiatives in New England:

The Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) was a 2010 \$4.7 billion grant program associated with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) created to promote the development and adoption of broadband throughout the United States, particularly in unserved and underserved areas. The program goals are to create jobs, advance technology and boost the economy. It is overseen by NTIA.

★ Regional BTOP Grant Recipients

1. Mass 123 through MBI: <http://www.massbroadband123.com/>
2. Open Cape: <http://capenet.com/about/opencape-project-history>
3. Network New Hampshire Now: <http://www.networknhnow.org/>
4. Maine 3 Ring Binder: <http://www.maineiberco.com/>

Big Question: What will be Gloucester's story?

Next Steps:

8 Feb: Meeting 1:30-3PM in Friend Room with Subject Matter Experts

22 Feb: Meeting 1:30-3PM in Friend Room to determine Action Plan

[Why it's time for the U.S. to get serious about its broadband problem](http://gigaom.com/2014/01/17/why-its-time-for-the-u-s-to-get-serious-about-its-broadband-problem/)

by Blair Levin, Gig.U

JAN. 17, 2014 - 3:50 PM PST

SUMMARY:

There has been too much talk and too little action when it comes to making sure the U.S. continues to stay at the forefront of high-speed internet access, and that needs to change.



A recent international ranking placing the United States 35th in bandwidth has generated another round of commentary [about how our broadband offerings compare to others](#). Unmentioned was that a year earlier, the then FCC Chairman gave a speech advocating the need for much faster, gigabit broadband networks throughout the United States.

Its absence might be seen as surprising; after all, a speech on point by the leading regulator generally plays a central role in framing the debate. It's not surprising, however, in light of it being the most amateurish speech ever given by an FCC Chair, one symptomatic of the policy problem.

Don't get me wrong; I was delighted that several years after the 2010 National Broadband Plan identified the need for a critical mass of communities with the world-leading bandwidth, the Chairman finally used his bully pulpit to agree. Further, I have spent the lion's share of my time since I finished the Plan volunteering with efforts designed to achieve that goal. Nonetheless, I saw the speech as amateurish, as that term is used in the military adage about where to focus one's attention: "amateurs talk tactics; professionals study logistics." In the case of policy, the guide should be, "amateurs talk strategy, rank amateurs talk aspirations, and professionals study execution."

The speech was full of aspirations but devoid of any analysis of why we don't already have such networks throughout the U.S. It's not a difficult analysis. We who wrote the Plan reviewed a record demonstrating that current market forces were unlikely to produce gigabit networks within any reasonable future. That analysis, and our subsequent discussions with various parties, helped pave the way for the Google Fiber project, which itself has spawned other gigabit projects.

As the Chairman ignored that analysis, it is not surprising that the strategy and tactics he proposed bordered on the absurd. He issued a "challenge" that there be a gigabit network in every state and proposed the FCC establish a best practices clearinghouse. This would make sense, I suppose, if the barrier to gigabit networks were that up until that moment the Chairman had neglected to request them — dubious — or that such a clearinghouse was not already available; also doubtful as several organizations already provided them.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the impact of the speech in the real world was zilch. Yes, it garnered tremendous press attention in the subsequent news cycle and succeeded in associating the Chair with faster networks. It has not, however, lead to a single network being planned or deployed, nor a single change in policy that would improve the environment for

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gigabit deployments. Actually, as a subsequent hearing demonstrated, the Chairman's own policies made the deployment environment more difficult.

Despite that, our country has made significant progress towards deploying gigabit networks, but that is entirely due to professionals—largely city officials who understand both the need and the way to adjust policy levers to improve the economics of deployment and engineers in companies finding more efficient deployment methods. These types are not big on speeches but they are willing to dig into the arcane problems of access to rights of way, pole attachments, construction permitting and other factors that affect incentives to upgrade.

A focus on execution does not guarantee success. Some deployments are succeeding; others are not. After all, when it comes to gigabit networks, all efforts are in beta. We are at the beginning of an upgrade cycle in which there are no tried and true turnkey solutions. At this stage, risk is higher. But someone has to undertake that risk for progress to follow. The broadband bonanza we enjoy today owes a great debt to efforts such as Time Warner's Qube, Apple's Newton, and @Home; all failed as a business matter but each demonstrates that a failed project can still advance the mission.

The mere expression of aspiration, however, does not. During and since my time working on the United States Broadband Plan, I have studied and been consulted on similar efforts around the world. A common lesson is execution matters more than aspiration. A commitment to periodic evaluation and course correction when obstacles arise can overcome inadequate aspiration. But the greatest aspiration will fail if execution is deficient.

In light of this, the debate over today's international rankings is misguided. A single metric is likely misleading. More important, given the long timetable of network deployments, what is true today reflects decisions of years past. The right debate is what should we be doing today to position ourselves to lead in the decade to come and that debate must evolve over time, as markets and technology change.

The prospect of gigabit networks is something to wish for, particularly in light of the court decision throwing out the FCC's network neutrality order. In a world of abundant bandwidth, concerns about allocating scarce bandwidth in an anti-competitive way diminish. If, however, we want to lead in the next generation of the internet, as we did in its first, we need leadership that models itself on generals who focus on supply chains, rather than talking heads who focus on sound bites. A strategy premised on "build it and they will come" is questionable but if our national policy is premised on "ask and they will build it" there is no question that our country will struggle to lead in the bandwidth delivered economy of the 21st century.

Blair Levin is the Executive Director of Gig.U, a group of research university communities seeking to accelerate next generation networks in their communities to support economic and educational development. He previously served as Executive Director of the National Broadband Plan effort and as FCC Chief of Staff from 1993-1997.