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From the Director's Desk NWCCOG Two-for-Two on recent DOLA Grant Awards

A million-dollar email hit our in-box from DOLA during the December 6th NWCCOG Council meeting announcing that the NWCCOG Broadband program had just been granted startup funding for Project THOR.

The \$1,000,000 grant submitted August 1st reduces network start-up expense for participating jurisdictions and includes funding for local meet-me-center builds. The grant will cut one-time local expenses for the project by up to 50%. THOR will dramatically increase local bandwidth capabilities and continue to drive down the cost of broadband to participating entities over time.

NWCCOG also submitted a companion grant to DOLA on December 1st to fund a 10-Year IRU with CDOT for 178 miles of project fiber which would further reduce the start-up costs to participants and reduce the 10-year cost of the project by another 10%. THOR is a resilient, affordable, middle-mile network loop connecting hosts in nine counties across NW Colorado with 100 gig service. The project touches 20% of the landmass of the state and 233,000 citizens which is 23% of non-front range population in Colorado.



In this image form Mammoth Networks, THOR's contracted Operator. Green Circles are First Phase Participants while Yellow Triangles represent possible later adopters THOR.

This grant announcement marks the turning point from project's more than two-year planning phase to an implementation phase that includes contracting in early 2019 and project deployment in spring and summer of 2019. The intent is for the Project THOR network to be fully available for use by September 1, 2019. Local uses for the network vary widely and in a few cases are still under development. Most hosts intend to provide service to their public facilities, contract with anchor partners and pursue competitive contracts with private ISPs to serve businesses and the general public in the future. Each local network served by THOR will be Open Access-within specific access stipulations set by the host jurisdiction. For more information about the project, contact Nate Walowitz at nwalowitz@nwccog.org.

That same day NWCCOG also received notice that the annual COG cycle grant from DOLA was awarded for the full requested amount of \$65,000. This grant will insure that three efforts that met with success in 2018 will be replicated in 2019: the Jackson County Enterprise Initiative (business consulting), the NWCCOG Economic Development Summit which is scheduled for May 2, 2019, again at the Silverthorne pavilion, and the NWCCOG Disaster Preparedness Workshop for Local Governments which just occurred on Dec 7th (see report out below). The Disaster Workshop event will move from Eagle County to Summit County for 2019. The 2019 grant also brings back a limited mini-grant program which will be announced as soon as the Contract with DOLA has been finalized in February. New DOLA guidelines prohibit mini-grants over \$5,000.

Jon Stavney

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NWCCOG Council opposes FCC Rulemaking that would undercut Cable Franchise Revenue

At the December 6th Council meeting following a phone update from Ken Fellman of Kissinger & Fellman P.C. the NWCCOG Council directed staff to take a position opposing the proposed FCC rulemaking changes that would allow cable companies to claim in-kind value to avoid paying the 5% cable franchise fees negotiated by many local jurisdictions.



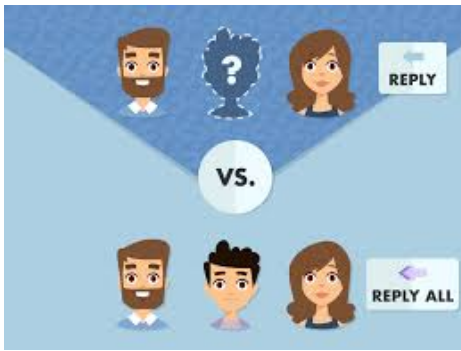
This could include using the value of PEG channel bandwidth to effectively cut off funding often used to support PEG channels and other government transparency and communications tools. Since the FCC comment period has expired, Council directed that the letter be sent to Colorado's Congressional Delegation. The [letter is posted on the NWCCOG website here](#).

Judge Rules Council Violated Open Meetings Law with Emails

The problem with email communications was reinforced at the December NWCCOG Council meeting when Basalt Trustee, Bill Infante reported-in that Basalt had lost a CORA case from a 2016 incident. The story is reported by the Aspen Times on December 3rd. Infante, who is new to the Council as of April, said the ruling underscored the value of training sponsored by NWCCOG in Dillon which he attended earlier this year.

Unlearning can be considerably more difficult than learning. Since use of social media and email is prevalent in most people's workplace daily lives, unlearning the habit of "sharing" or "forwarding" to include all who you'd think ought to know can be difficult for officials who acquire private habits which may be "good for business" in one setting but are illegal in their role in serving the public.

This may be why Elected Official 101 class, often taught on "day one" by a staff attorney, then reinforced again-and-again at retreats, conferences and workshops hosted by various entities--NWCCOG, CML, or CIRSA-often fail as re-education efforts.



Municipal attorneys often evoke a bright line about ANY ex-parte communications between elected on quasi-judicial matters. That distinction may be confusing since it only takes a couple forwards or one "reply all" to also run afoul of open meetings law when the chain accumulates a quorum regarding ANY public business. Judge Granger's order noted "this email chain clearly involves matters of policy-making, addressed to the entire Town Council."

The re-education may also be a challenge because many elected and town staff achieve success in their positions by being exceptional at public engagement through being

open communicators who strive to understand, share and seek feedback. The bread-and-butter of these leaders is often how approachable they have been for years sharing insight and information with their fellow citizens. It is kind of what they do. Elected officials are at their best when they deliberate at length with their peers and then translate between the public and government staff, except when the law says they shouldn't. They just need to do all that on the record in the meeting instead of out in cyberspace or their community.

At the meeting, Grand Lake Manager, Jim White noted that he has a reminder "Don't Reply All" as a part of his email signature. Vail Manager Greg Clifton said that he was working on a training for his Council in the next few months which he hopes to open to other jurisdictions. He empathized that in Vail, Council may only encounter a quasi-judicial file 2-3 times per year.

It reminded me that our local officials are elected to those positions as amateurs standing in for the citizenry, not professionals. They just need to adjust some habits to be able to preserve the sanctity of the process.

NWCCOG Shout-Out to 2018 Successes of an employee Learning Culture



Rachel Lunney

Rachel Lunney who manages all aspects of NWCCOG's Economic Development program for the past 10 years just completed 5 years of training and passed the written and oral exams required to achieve Designation of Certified Economic Developer from the IEDC in December, a national recognition that denotes mastery of skills in economic development. Lunney compared the rigors of the program to the MBA she achieved long ago. NWCCOG is proud of her success and increased expertise

We have also stepped up our game with Tina Strang NWCCOG's Long-Term Care Ombudsman, when she became a certified Ombudsman

following 50 hours of training and 10 hours of shadowing this fall. NWCCOG is excited to have Tina dedicated to this important role advocating for residents and working towards improvements in long term care facilities in our region. This is the first time the Ombudsman position has been part of a staff position and not one of the many roles juggled by the AAAA director.



Tina Strang

At NWCCOG, we strive to support employees with continuing professional education and value-added trainings. Part of the reason our elevator program exists in the first place are the twin challenges most of our jurisdictions faced, first not having a critical mass of elevators to employ a certified elevator inspector, and second the barrier to entry for inspectors dictated by the state and industry practice which includes roughly a year of mentorship, passage of the QEI test, as well as

28 hrs. of state training each year which in 2018 totaled more than 150 hours across the team.

In other cases, professional development work stems from an interest in expanding job duties. Elaina West, our office manager has taken on benefits management, safety & wellness coordination for the organization and shares HR duties with the Executive Director. Erin Fisher, Director of the Alpine Area Agency on Aging in her first year at her management role focused on content expertise, though she soon realized that managing people required another bundle of skills. Both expressed an interest in learning more about HR practices during their 2017 evaluations and took the initiative in 2018 to attend a 2-day SHRM course together in 2018 while continuing to tap into the many HR resources available to SHRM members. Both continue to actively suggest and research improvements to NWCCOG practices, policies & procedures as a result of their interest.

Though a reading group may not sound worthy of being "on the clock," a group of 5 NWCCOG employees who each expressed some kind of communications challenge during 2017 evaluations proved otherwise by reading *Crucial Conversations* together and meeting once a month for 6 months. Their "capstone" was reporting out what they learned at a staff meeting this past week.

The Energy Program infuses training into each of their staff meetings, daily meetings and Skype calls. This past year they boasted 2 employees becoming Energy Audit Certified by passing the Building Performance Institute (BPI) 3-hr field test and computer on-line test after a week-long training in Santa FE NM. One week each year the Energy program invites vendors they utilize to train on installation practices, and partner entities such as the Colorado Energy Office and Energy Outreach Colorado to train employees. This year the week included a Trac Pipe (flexible gas pipe) training and certification. We have had Cirsa out in person for forklift driving training and this year we hope to participate in Cirsa ice driving training. New hires are shadowed for their first 10,000 sf of insulation installation, and must perform each possible scope competently and pass a test before being let out in the field unsupervised. Then they learn how to install high efficiency furnaces with a trainer for ten installs. We also have had OSHA, Asbestos, Lead and other BPI trainings.

Finally, NWCCOG is making many internal systems upgrades as a team. In March, staff invited Angelo Fernandez who is now the HR Director for Eagle County to talk about emerging trends in performance management which led to much discussion between Jon and the leadership team, resulting in a new quarterly evaluation practice for 2019 and NWCCOG purchasing performance management and on-boarding modules from NEOGOV to start using in January of 2019.

Disaster Preparedness Workshop a Success

Twenty three presenters and more than 70 attendees participated in the first Disaster Preparedness Workshop on December 7th hosted by NWCCOG at the Eagle County building. Highlights included a special presentation by Town of Lyons Town Administrator, Victoria Simonsen about the 2013 flood and the ongoing recovery 5 years later, and a fascinating and somber panel discussion from the July Lake Christine Fire that included representatives from two fire districts, the Eagle County Sheriff, County Manager, Innovation and Technology manager as well as Basalt Town Manager and Commissioner Jeanne McQueeney. Video links for four of the eight sessions can be viewed on VIMEO via these links. Thanks to Eagle County TV 18 crew for the video production. Thanks to a second DOLA award, the event will occur next year and is planned to be coordinated in Summit County.

- [Lessons Learned from the 2013 Flood in Lyons, Co](#)
 - [Lessons Learned from the 2018 Lake Christine Fire](#)
 - [How to Prepare Before it Happens & State/Federal Government Involvement During the BIG One](#)
 - [Pre-disaster Mitigation and Land Use Planning for Community Resilience](#)
 - [Planning Special Events as Incidents](#)
-



Join the NWCCOG Team

[Check out our job opportunities here.](#)

NWCCOG is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

I-70 Coalition Survey

Development Research Partners has been retained by the Collaborative Effort and the I-70 Coalition to conduct a study to estimate the economic impacts of a high-speed transit system in the I-70 Mountain Corridor.

Please help take this opportunity to share your opinions. It should take less than 10 minutes for an chance to help shape the future. Please complete the survey before December 31.

[Take the Survey Here.](#)

Please feel free to contact Patty Silverstein with Development Research Partners should you have any questions. Phone: 303-991-0073

Email: patty@developmentresearch.net

2019 NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 24, 2019

Full Council, EDD Board & NLF Board Meeting

Location: Colorado Mountain College Vail Valley, 150 Miller Ranch Rd., Edwards, CO Room number to be announced after the first of the year.

Time: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Primary Agenda Items: Introduction of new members/representatives; elect executive committee & officers; annual NLF Board meeting; EDD Board meeting & election of officers.

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

www.nwccog.org

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