

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Network Wars: NTIA Hears What Should Receive Infrastructure Dollars

NTIA was flooded with comments Friday on the implementation of the broadband programs that will distribute \$65 billion to support broadband deployment and adoption efforts. Unsurprisingly, stakeholders had a wide range of thoughts on what networks should be built using the funds, and whether the agency should give preference to any particular type of technology.

NCTA advocated for networks that can not only meet the statutorily required minimum 100/20Mbps service benchmark, but also be made more powerful in the future. “They should be able to deliver at least 80% of the advertised speeds during the peak busy hour(s) on the network for at least 80% of the time, and the median idle latency in the ISP’s access network should not exceed 100 milliseconds,” the association said.

According to **NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association**, settling for a less powerful network has been what led to the failure of many other federal programs aiming to bring broadband to unserved areas.

“Particularly, under the auspices of wanting to appear ‘technologically neutral, too many previous broadband funding programs have failed to publish transparent, objective standards for applicants and technologies, have failed to vet providers prior to welcoming their participation, and/or aimed for broadband speeds that are designed first and foremost to ‘let all providers play’ rather than focusing on long-term consumer

needs,” NTCA said in its comments.

To avoid that, the association wants to see standards published for vetting out funding applicants that will require the sign-off of a professional engineer licensed within a given project’s state. It also encouraged the agency to establish a heavily weighted priority for supporting networks constructed to meet a 100Mbps symmetrical standard, something NTCA says will ensure rural Americans are able to receive the same service as their urban counterparts for the foreseeable future.

ACA Connects said in its comments that the \$42.45 billion Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program should be able to achieve its goal of supporting broadband deployment, mapping and adoption projects in every U.S. state and territory, but only if NTIA creates standards for states to follow that ensure they direct the maximum amount of funding towards future-proof fiber broadband service from “experienced and financially sound” providers.

But the **Free State Foundation** warned against putting fiber on a pedestal, urging NTIA to align the program’s rules with the technology-neutral approach laid out in the legislation to allow providers to choose the best option for them given the location being served and the amount of available funding. “Some are better suited to densely populated areas, some to rural locations, some to certain types of terrain. The freedom to select the technological option(s) best suited to a given area will keep costs low,” FSF said in its comments. “Any technical specifications

Mark Your Calendars!

Cablefax 2022 Award Submission Deadlines

The FAXIES Awards

Deadline: March 11
Final Deadline: March 18

Top Ops Nominations

Deadline: April 1

The Diversity List Nominations

Deadline: June 3
Final Deadline: June 10

Most Powerful Women Nominations

Deadline: August 12
Final Deadline: August 19

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that NTIA does embrace, after consultation with industry subject-matter experts, must not disqualify or disadvantage non-fiber proposals.”

Over the last several months, many across the industry have expressed concern about how connectivity providers will be able to meet the tight four-year buildout deadlines laid out for the funding provided through the infrastructure legislation. As if supply chain issues weren't enough, labor shortages have also emerged as an obstacle for all providers.

NCTA told NTIA to keep those roadblocks in mind as it crafts the program, removing as many obstacles to deployment that are within its control. That includes the streamlining of permitting procedures to ensure funds are deployed quickly, removing restrictions on access to utility poles in unserved and underserved areas and requiring that states only grant funding awards to subgrantees that have the ability to complete their proposed projects.

The potential for delays in the buildouts has also gained the attention of federal and state lawmakers. Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) sent a letter to Mitch Landrieu, President Biden's Senior Advisor for Infrastructure Coordination, Monday with similar concerns to those aired by NCTA. He urged federal officials to ensure communication with state governments

“Providing states and localities with technical assistance, promoting the use of model codes, such as those developed by the **Federal Communications Commission**, and prioritizing funding for projects that adhere to productive permitting processes are all ways to encourage the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars,” Wicker said.

DISH, TEGNA KISS AND MAKE UP

Just in time for the Olympics and Super Bowl Sunday, **DISH** and **TEGNA** agreed to a new retransmission consent agreement Friday for all 64 of the broadcaster's stations. The resolution comes after nearly four months of fighting between the pair. TEGNA stations have been dark on DISH since Oct. 6, and the battle between the broadcaster and satellite provider quickly escalated. DISH didn't wait long before filing a good faith negotiation complaint against TEGNA at the FCC, and TEGNA submitted its own complaint, the first ever filed by the company, in November. Neither company confirmed that those complaints will be withdrawn.

NBC'S OLYMPIC BOOM

According to preliminary data, Sunday's Beijing Olympics on **NBC, USA Network, Peacock** and other streaming platforms averaged a Total Audience Delivery (TAD) of 13.7 million viewers—up from 13.6 million viewers on Saturday night, 12.8 million primetime viewers on Friday night, and 8.0 million viewers on Thursday night. NBCU said this is the first time that primetime Winter Games coverage began with four consecutive nights of increased viewership. NBCUniversal's partnership with **iSpot.tv** seems to be working swimmingly as well with the Olympics currently being slated as the #1 program for ad delivery across all of broadcast. Over the weekend when the Olympics were on in primetime, the Olympics had a 14% lighter ad load and delivered 247% more ad impressions per unit than the other three broadcast networks, according to data from iSpot and NBCU.

NIELSEN COMMITS TO SUPPORTING DIVERSE MEDIA

Nielsen isn't leaving anyone behind, kicking off a Diverse Media Equity program designed to make media companies with

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The advertisement includes a smaller image of the Cablefax Daily magazine cover, dated Monday, November 2, 2020. The cover features the headline 'Deal Talk: RCN/News/Grande CEO Discusses \$6.16Bn Strategic Deal' and other industry news. It also includes a 'Most Powerful Women' award announcement and a 'Save the Date' for a Women's Empowerment & Virtual Celebration Event.

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diverse ownership more visible to advertisers and agencies. The measurement firm will begin measuring diverse-owned media that has historically been excluded from investment, funding certification fees of that media and launching a report on diverse-owned media reach and audience profiles. The first edition, released Monday, found that 87% of survey respondents want to see more content featuring people from outside their identity group. Black-owned national TV reaches 19% of total viewers P18+ and 27% of Black viewers 18 and over, according to the study. Hispanic audiences have 254.1 billion minutes of viewing power and Asian American communities have \$1.3 trillion in annual buying power.

TCA NOTEBOOK

Disney Branded Television President Ayo Davis revealed a diverse and colorful lineup of programming during her first **TCA** presentation leading the brand. She showed off a selection of series for younger audiences that take a new spin on well-known IP that reflected her team's commitment to inclusive storytelling. Joining the **Disney+** originals slate is "American Born Chinese," an adaptation of the graphic novel that follows a teenager that gets wrapped up in a battle between mythological Chinese gods. **Disney Junior** is celebrating the 10th anniversary of "Doc McStuffins," the first animated series directed towards preschoolers with a Black female lead, with a music special set to debut later this year. **Marvel** lovers also won a piece of the program with the announcements of Disney+ originals "Growing Up" and "Rennervations." The former is a docuseries executive produced by *Brie Larson* that explores the complexities of coming-of-age today while the latter will see *Jeremy Renner* repurposing commercial vehicles to meet the needs of communities across America. Think a school bus transformed into a library, or a mobile art and dance studio.

AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC's** Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau is seeking comment on a proposal to require broadband providers to create labels providing consumers with information on various aspects of their service. At the point of sale, labels must show introductory rates, speeds, data caps and other information on network management. Comments are due March 9 and reply comments must be in on or before March 24.

NBCU OFFERS VIEWERS CHOICE FOR SUPER BOWL

NBCU will debut new aspects of football coverage for Super Bowl LVI. Around 40 cameras will focus on the field to enhance replays for fans and the officials, and the network will introduce new graphics for the broadcast as well as a new scorebug. NBCU will also have options to view the game in virtual and augmented reality. The battle between the Cincinnati Bengals and Los Angeles Rams kicks off Sunday at 6:30pm on **NBC**, **Peacock** and **Telemundo**.

CANELA.TV TAPS INTO PROGRAMMING MOODS

In a partnership with **Vionlabs**, **Canela.TV** will offer subscribers content discovery based on the emotion each content

category evokes with the AI-powered "Moods." Moods analyzes video metadata to utilize relevant information needed to determine the emotional impact of content. Canela.TV will then automatically generate mood labels and values for its content library.

CARRIAGE

VIZIO SmartCast viewers can now access subscription streaming apps **History Vault**, **A&E Crime Central** and **Lifetime Movie Club** on their smart TVs thanks to an expanded agreement with **A+E Networks**. In addition, VIZIO and A+E have partnered to make three AVOD channels available on VIZIO's WatchFree+ service centered around some of the programmer's most iconic series: "Ax Men", "Ice Road Truckers" and "Modern Marvels."

PROGRAMMING

ESPN re-signed anchor *Ryan Smith* to a multiyear deal and will expand his role to permanent co-anchor of the 7am edition of "SportsCenter." Smith will also continue to serve as a legal analyst and fill in on other shows. – The 14th season of "Naked and Afraid" premieres Feb. 27 at 8pm on **Discovery** and will stream on **discovery+**. The upcoming season will feature a transgender survivalist, a first for the show, being paired with a South African farmer with Asperger's. – **Showtime** renewed documentary series "Vice" for a third and fourth season, with the third premiering May 1. The first eight episodes will air weekly, culminating with a midseason finale on June 19, while the other eight episodes will show later this year.

HONORS

C2HR is taking nominations for its Excellence in HR Awards to celebrate achievements in employee engagement, workplace wellness and social impact. All C2HR members are eligible and the deadline for nominations is April 30. Nomination forms are available [here](#).

PEOPLE

NBCU President/Chief Business Officer *Krishan Bhatia* has been elected Chair of the **Interactive Advertising Bureau's** board. Bhatia's been on the board since Feb. 2019 and previously served as Vice Chair. *Alysia Borsa*, Chief Business Officer/President, Lifestyle at **Dotdash Meredith**, was elected to the Vice Chair position. New additions to the board include **Publicis Media's** *Helen Lin*, **IPG Mediabrands's** *Daryl Lee*, **GroupM North America's** *Kirk McDonald*, **dentsu Media's** *Doug Rozen* and *Rob Wilk* from **Microsoft Advertising**. – *George Kassas* has been named to the Board of Directors of **Nrby**. Kassas is a strategic advisor to cable operators and vendors in North America and CALA markets. – **Insight TV** announced three new hires: *Michael O'Connor* as VP, Production and Content; *Brittany Benton* as Global Marketing Manager and *Darren Newman* as Global PR and Communications Manager. – **USTelecom** announced *Allison Remsen* has been named its first Chief Strategy Officer. In addition to her role as EVP, Remsen will assist USTelecom's advocacy strategies and work alongside other association executives.