NEXT CENTURY CITIES

WHAT’S NEW IN NIST’S CYBERSECURITY FRAMEWORK?

WELCOMING PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

PARTICIPATING IN BEAD AND DIGITAL EQUITY PLANNING

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As I’m settling into my role as Executive Director, I’m humbled at the amount of support and positive affirmations I’ve received from our partners and member municipalities.

This month, I’m thrilled to announce the City of Philadelphia as our newest member! For over 12 years, Philadelphia has been one of the most dedicated cities focused on digital equity and inclusion. With 1.6 million people, the City often found itself almost 10% lower than the national average for broadband connections. Since 2020, they have dedicated themselves to moving that needle, creating the PHLConnectED free broadband program for students and establishing a Digital Navigator network dedicated to getting people connected to affordable broadband, devices, and digital skills training. I’m proud to bring Philadelphia in as our newest member municipality and look forward to working with them in the future.

I’m excited to hit the road and meet more of our member municipalities to learn about the amazing work you’re doing. I recently visited with members in Michigan before attending the Michigan Broadband Summit hosted by Merit. It was incredible to learn about the amazing municipal fiber network in Holland and the digital navigator and computer refurbishing work at Human-I-T in Detroit. I encourage our members and partners to continue to reach out and schedule time to meet. I look forward to hearing from you and finding ways for NCC to support your efforts.

Andy Stutzman
The National Institute of Standards and Technology ("NIST") is not frequently associated with telecommunications policymaking. Founded in 1901, NIST promotes U.S. innovation and industrial competitiveness by advancing measurement science, standards, and technology in ways that enhance economic security and improve quality of life. One aspect of their work is the creation and maintenance of a cybersecurity framework that evolves to keep pace with technology, and digital threats, integrating lessons learned from academia and industry. As National Cybersecurity Awareness Month draws to a close, let’s explore the newest iteration of the NIST Cybersecurity Framework ("Framework") and how municipalities can weave it into the broader discussions about broadband deployment.

I. Understanding the Framework
The key to understanding the Framework is to understand that it is not a set of processes to be followed or rules to abide by, but a set of outcomes that institutions should strive to achieve. Additionally, the Framework does not describe the order in which each piece should be implemented, but an organization should determine its particular strengths and weaknesses and implement portions of the Framework accordingly. The Framework 2.0 consists of six core functions: "Govern," "Identify," "Protect," "Detect," "Respond," and "Recover."

"Govern" Explores end results to inform how an organization will achieve and prioritize the outcomes of the other five functions.
In other words, this core function is about establishing and maintaining an institution's cybersecurity risk management plan, centering expectations, and developing a policy around its strategy and expectations.

"Identify" The Identify function is intended to work with the Govern function to help determine current cybersecurity risks and organize them based on institutional priorities laid out under Govern.

"Protect" This function supports institutional initiatives to secure those assets and lower the likelihood or impact of potential cybersecurity failures. Outcomes such as training, authentication plans, and access controls are just some of the projected results that are contemplated under this function.

"Detect" How an institution plans to find and analyze potential cybersecurity attacks and compromises.

"Respond" An institution’s ability to contain the impact of cybersecurity incidents.

"Recover" The outcomes an institution can work toward to support the timely restoration of normal operations.

Each of the above functions also contains categories and subcategories that can help institutions narrow the scope of their planning process and identify and address specific challenges or concerns. As such, all functions should be considered together to determine overall goals and desired outcomes before applying categories and subcategories to find areas where similar end goals are desired.

II. Using the Framework
While describing the Framework's intent helps explain potential outcomes, applying it to real-world situations is different. By collecting and collating function information into profiles to address specific issue areas an institution can better understand, assess, and communicate current and target cybersecurity goals.

Further, the Framework is unable to independently track the achievement of cybersecurity outcomes. Meaning, that once a baseline is taken utilizing the Framework to reassess cyber policy can provide an institution with evidence of achievement, or areas to be addressed. The Framework also suggests that it can be used to manage supply chain risk. Utilizing the Framework at key intersections of the supply chain may shed light on vulnerabilities that arise from those particular interactions that may not occur elsewhere.

The intent of the Framework is not to be a rigid document relegated only to certain situations. Applying the Framework and the questions it asks to interactions and systems that may fall outside of traditional risk assessment models can lead to the identification and addressing of risks that would otherwise be unaccounted for.
As the United States prepares for billions of dollars to make their way to communities for broadband deployment, state broadband offices are developing plans that will determine where funding is allocated. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) published a dashboard showing where states are in the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) planning process. NTIA also lists state plans available for comment and correlating due dates.

All states and territories must submit Volume I and Volume II of their Initial Proposal by December 27, 2023. Louisiana is the first state to complete both volumes of the Initial Proposal, one of which is still undergoing NTIA review. 12 states and territories have not started the Initial Proposal process. Importantly, states are not only required to submit their Initial Proposal to NTIA for approval, but also to offer their plans for 30 day public comment periods.

Local governments and community-based organizations have important insight into potential broadband partners, notable deployment and adoption barriers, and service gaps. Sharing stories, data, and ideas with state leadership not only strengthens planning, but also offers a pathway into ongoing collaboration. While broadband plans are an important first step, coordination and partnership transform plans into sustainable long-term strategies.

Next Century Cities’ State Broadband and Digital Equity Plans page is designed to help community leaders see where their state or territory is in the process, review existing plans, and identify opportunities to participate in the public engagement process. For assistance submitting comments, please contact NCC’s Senior Policy Counsel for Local & State Affairs, Corian Zacher, corian@nextcenturycities.org.
For rural communities in the United States, cutting back or eliminating coal mining industries has had catastrophic consequences on their local economies. Wyoming and Appalachia produce the majority of the nation’s coal and have undoubtedly been hit the hardest by the energy industry’s shift away from coal mining. Without this long standing cornerstone of the economy, individuals in these areas are forced to look for work in other sectors. Although the US Bureau of Labor Statistics placed technology adjacent jobs as almost half of the fastest growing occupations, these rural areas unfortunately rank lowest in broadband access, compared to national averages, leaving rural residents out of this ever-growing workforce. Approximately 22 percent of Americans in rural areas lack fixed coverage broadband compared to 1.5 percent of Americans in urban areas. In fact, Montana and West Virginia rank in the ten worst states for internet access based on coverage, speed, and price. Without access to broadband, devices, and digital skills, hundreds of thousands of Americans are at a major disadvantage in finding employment or advancing their careers, and this is particularly disastrous for these rural communities that once depended on a coal economy.

Fortunately, the Just Transition Fund is here to help.

Under the Obama Administration, the POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) Initiative was created in order to invest federal resources into the economy and workforce for communities negatively impacted by changes in the coal economy. Out of the POWER Initiative, the Just Transition Fund emerged as the only national fund solely dedicated to coal community transition and is still the only organization solely focused on this issue and positioned to find, connect, and scale locally led initiatives.

The Just Transition Fund (JTF) utilizes a two-faceted approach to help rural coal-impacted communities increase their broadband access:

1. JTF provides rolling, rapid-response grants, up to $100,000 and for a variety of purposes, such as grant support that can go towards hiring grant writers, conducting needs analysis, etc.
2. JTF provides technical assistance to help develop competitive federal applications, which can include assistance identifying which federal program is a good fit for your project or feedback from a grant reviewer on draft applications before submission.

The following NCC municipalities meet the coal-impacted county requirements and are already positioned to receive support from JTF:

- Riverside County, CA
- Martin County, FL
- Montgomery County, MD
- Larimer County, CO
- Letcher County, KY
- Cuyahoga County, OH

If you would like to be connected to JTF or want more information on how they can benefit your community’s work towards broadband access and deployment, please contact Stacey Baxter at stacey@nextcenturycities.org.
NCC IS ADVOCATING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

Explore the work we have been doing to advance your community's interests and uplift your untold stories.

Next Century Cities Pens Letter of Support for Oklahoma Broadband Cooperative

Next Century Cities Updates State Broadband One Pagers

Next Century Cities Heads to Philadelphia for the Technology Learning Collaborative’s Annual Conference

Next Century Cities Weighs in on Pennsylvania’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Challenge Process