

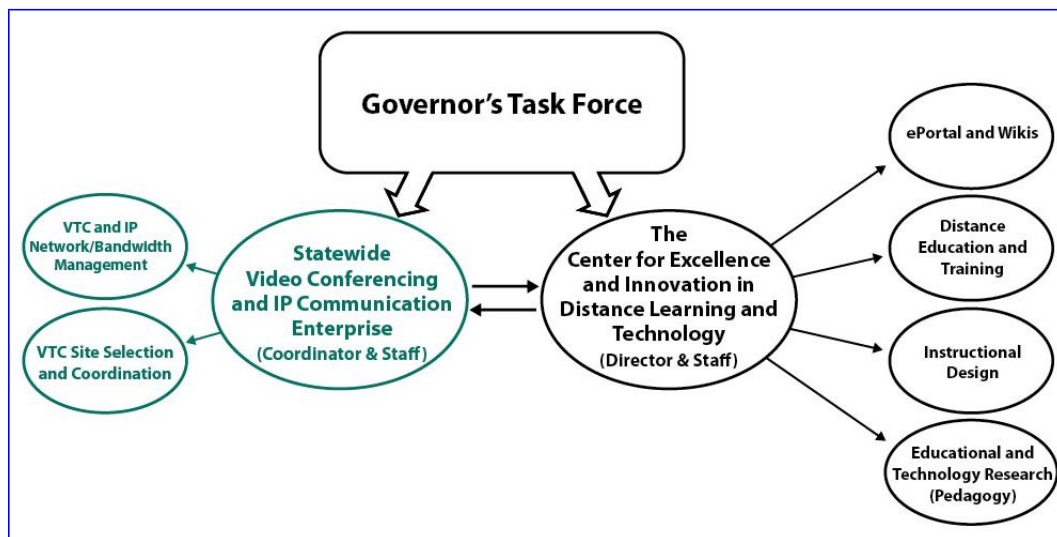
TASK FORCE ON DISTANCE EDUCATION, VIDEO CONFERENCING, AND IP-BASED COMMUNICATIONS

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNOR FREUDENTHAL 9 December 2009

Background: In November of 2008, Wyoming’s Governor Dave Freudenthal formed a task force to examine distance education, video conferencing, and other IP-based communications across the state. Task Force members are Wendy Curran, Governor’s Advisor for Health Care; Rob Hurless, Governor’s Advisor for Energy and Telecommunications; Dr. Karla Leach, President, Western Wyoming College; Dr. Jim McBride, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Bob von Wolfradt, State CIO and co-chairs Robert Aylward and Dr. Maggi Murdock of the University of Wyoming. The primary goal of the Governor’s Task Force is to find ways to integrate and enhance distance learning opportunities at all levels (K-12, community college, UW, professional development, and lifelong learning) as well as determine how best to integrate the various video conferencing systems that the state currently supports. The efforts of the Task Force are aimed at focusing these strategic state resources to better serve the residents of Wyoming.

Early in 2009 the Task Force issued RFPs to hire consultants to help examine and make recommendations concerning distance learning and video conferencing in Wyoming. The consultants were charged with examining the needs of the state’s residents and practitioners with regard to distance education and video conferencing, making an inventory of existing distance education programs and video conference systems, analyzing the information gathered, and making recommendations to the Task Force. The consultants finished their work and provided their recommendations to the Task Force in late summer 2009.

Recommendations: Utilizing the work of the consultants and focusing its recommendations to accomplish the objectives outlined for the Task Force by the Governor, the Task Force has integrated its recommendations to the Governor under the concepts of (1) a *Video Conferencing Enterprise* (VCE) and (2) a *Center for Excellence and Innovation in Distance Learning and Technology* (Center).



VIDEO CONFERENCING ENTERPRISE (VCE)

- The purpose of the Video Conferencing Enterprise is, through the Task Force, to integrate state video networks and systems in order to establish an effective state video conference capability that is technologically robust, expands video conferencing service capabilities, and minimizes duplication among state agencies and government entities.
- The Video Conferencing Enterprise will be responsible for integrating the existing independent video conferencing systems through:
 - setting standards and protocols for current and future technologies;
 - integrating scheduling;
 - identifying, developing and integrating appropriate end sites;
 - planning for and implementing future IP-based technologies; and
 - allocated VCE funding for statewide video conferencing and emerging technologies – all being based on the needs of constituents/stakeholders.
- The Video Conferencing Enterprise will report to the Task Force.
- The Task Force that will provide appropriate representation of video stakeholders and will provide oversight of the Video Conferencing Enterprise.
- The Video Conferencing Enterprise will require a Director/Coordinator with supporting staff.
- Initial funding for the Video Conferencing Enterprise will be through a legislative appropriation recommended by the Governor.
- In accordance with the purpose of these recommendations, stakeholders in the state's video conferencing networks and potential users of video conferencing will be informed about the Video Conference Enterprise and have a voice in suggesting standards and protocols, integrating scheduling, identifying appropriate end sites, and planning for future IP-based technologies based on their expertise, experience, and needs.
- The VCE will work closely with the Distance Learning Center in establishing the state's video conferencing infrastructure.
- The integration of the WDE and State video conferencing systems can begin immediately, with the understanding that the Video Task Force will approve final protocols and standards to guide the integration.

THE CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN DISTANCE LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY

- The purpose of the Center is to focus, integrate, and enhance distance learning opportunities.
- The Center will be responsible for providing leadership and support for distance learning opportunities of all kinds and at all levels: K-12, higher education, professional development, training, and lifelong learning.
- The Center must be independent, centrally funded, and legislatively mandated to provide the authority, responsibility, and accountability necessary to make the Center efficient and effective.
- A Distance Learning Council will provide oversight of the Center.
- The Center will require a Director with support staff.
- An integral part of the Center will be functional groups, composed of existing and future personnel with expertise in various aspects of distance learning (e.g., pedagogy, instructional design, learning technologies), with assignments in their existing institutions and part of their time assigned to the Center as needed.

- In accordance with the purpose of these recommendations, the Center will be initially defined through a charrette-style visioning meeting, to include stakeholders from all learning sectors, in order to provide more details about the Center for legislative consideration.
- The Center will work closely with VCE in establishing the state's video conferencing infrastructure.

The Task Force will continue to prioritize and develop other consultant recommendations and incorporate other appropriate stakeholder inputs to integrate, enhance, and support distance education , video conferencing, and IP-based communication in Wyoming.

Appendix A

Background on the Governor's Task Force on Distance Education, Video Conferencing, and IP-Based Communications

THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE

In order to prepare Wyoming for a technology-based future in which the state is linked and works through technological means as well as small town interactions, in November 2008 Governor Freudenthal appointed a Task Force to examine and make recommendations on Distance Education, Video Conferencing, and IP-based Communications for the State of Wyoming. Task Force members are Wendy Curran, Governor's Advisor for Health Care; Rob Hurless, Governor's Advisor for Energy and Telecommunications; Dr. Karla Leach, President, Western Wyoming College; Dr. Jim McBride, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Bob von Wolfradt, State CIO and co-chairs Robert Aylward and Dr. Maggi Murdock of the University of Wyoming. The Governor's charge to the Task Force included, but was not limited to the following core activities:

1. Soliciting input from all affected parties
2. Inventorying current efforts across the various state institutions
3. Examining the historical authorization for these activities
4. Examining the source of funding of these efforts
5. Eliciting the set of issues that have lead us to the current efforts
6. Examining current governance of these activities
7. Analyzing the above information
8. Making specific recommendations regarding various options for improving the provision of these services

To accomplish the goals set forth by the Governor, the Task Force prepared two Requests for Proposal (RFP) to provide a comprehensive review and recommendations for cost-effective statewide solutions for distance learning and video conferencing. In addition to the Governor's charge, the Task Force's goals for the project were to look for ways to effectively develop a support structure for distance education and video conferencing in Wyoming. The goals included:

1. Making state government more efficient and effective through increased access, time savings, cost savings and enhanced communication;
2. Providing a robust technological base for delivery of distance education;
3. Enhancing the business and economic development climate in Wyoming by providing better communications capability between state government and businesses;
4. Easily linking and integrating all state government agencies as well as external users; and
5. Increasing citizen access to Wyoming state government by providing additional avenues of communication input.
6. Enhancing and improving the provision of distance learning services, programs, processes, and practices, including potential structures, course management systems, technologies, and learning assessment.

Each consultant was asked to (1) determine the needs of constituents, (2) examine the current environment, (3) analyze the difference between constituent needs and what currently exists, and (4) make recommendations for improvements, integration, funding, and governance.

In March 2009 the Task Force awarded PlanNet the contract to conduct the review and development recommendations for video conferencing and IP-based communications and in April 2009 Wainhouse Research was awarded the contract to conduct the review and develop recommendations for distance education. Through the spring and summer the consultants held focus groups in locations across the state, interviewed constituents involved in video conferencing and distance education, and interviewed members of the public. They also undertook an inventory of Wyoming's current video conference systems and distance learning programs. The Wainhouse Research and Plan Net completed analyses reports of distance learning and video conferencing in Wyoming can be found at <http://sites.google.com/site/wyovideo/>.