Resilient Louisiana Commission: IT and Communications Task Force

Charge 2 Deliverable Briefing
# Information Technology and Communications Task Force

## Task Force Members

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Approach Taken by ITC Task Force

Two Primary Perspectives

• **Direct resilience of ITC sector providers:** Assessment of Information Technology and Communications sector in near and long term contexts

• **Dependency of other sectors on ITC providers and infrastructure:** Assess impacts and evaluate dependency of other sectors on ITC

  • COVID-19 highlighted the critical nature of broadband accessibility and adoption for our state
  • Across every sector, availability and access of broadband was a critical ingredient that impacted the degree of resilience related to education, healthcare, and commerce
  • Beyond connectivity, availability of devices, and education related to how to use digital tools was also highlighted as an area of improvement

Our recommendations focus on improving Louisiana’s resilience in these areas, and they have a specific focus on how to address equity across the state related to these topics, in both rural and urban settings.
Methodology for Charge 2 Deliverable

• Cross-Sector interviews with each Resilient Louisiana Commission Task Force team across all 15 sectors

• Additional stakeholder interviews conducted with entities within each sector where possible

• Research from industry analysts and 3rd party organizations (e.g. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Forbes.com, McKinsey & Company)

• Incorporated Charge 1 content where deemed still relevant and timely

• Detailed Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis
Sector Impact Assessment Summary
Information Technology Sub-Sector

• Many IT related jobs across the state immediately transitioned to Work from Home or were considered essential under CISA
• Reintroduction into office environments for IT workers is generally occurring on a gradual basis
• Many tech companies across the US are acknowledging a major change in workplace patterns in the future including long term WFH arrangements (efficiency and effectiveness are not impacted in many cases)
• Technology unemployment rates (nationally) show high level of resilience with a 3.7% unemployment rate in May; source: CompTIA
• Loss of employment has occurred in IT Sector companies tied directly to heavily impacted economic sectors; good “re-absorption” occurring with support from regional EDOs and LED
• Some impacts to hiring trends indicate a decreased rate of new jobs, but hiring is still occurring in strategic/key areas
Sector Impact Assessment Summary
Information Technology Sub-Sector (Cont...)

• Longer term spending trends related to IT illustrate need for caution related to secondary and tertiary impacts

• “At a time of extreme cost-cutting (73% of IP CFOs plan to cancel or defer investments), only 15% of IP CFOs are planning to cut digital transformation investments (e.g., automation, AI and the industrial IoT), and only 2% say they’ll cut planned investments in cybersecurity and data privacy.”

• Investment areas that are accelerating: cloud migration/infrastructure, cybersecurity, business automation, specialized software, remote work...

• Organizations are examining their IT workforce supply chains
Sector Impact Assessment Summary
Communications Sub-Sector

• As a critical infrastructure provider and deemed essential business, communications providers have continued to operate as authorized
• Multiple communications providers in Louisiana have signed the FCC’s Keep Americans Connected Pledge
• Taking all appropriate steps to help maintain the ongoing health and safety of its employees and customers
• Corporate operation (non-essential services) employees are working remotely, most corporate offices closed, providers have scaled back to a limited number retail presence
• Companies are providing a number of emergency bandwidth upgrades to government, business and residential customers
• Self-healing architectures and restoration technologies are helping to maintain reliable networks
Sector Impact Assessment Summary
Communications Sub-Sector (Cont...)

• The pandemic has accelerated the need for increased adoption and greater access to broadband services due to higher demands in the areas of telehealth, distance learning and digital cutover for small businesses

• More consumers need connectivity at their homes; more people being at home has contributed to rising broadband usage

• For employees who must deploy outside their homes to meet critical customer needs, some providers have implemented significantly enhanced compensation plans

• In some cases, comprehensive coronavirus leave of absence policies have been implemented for employees
ITC Task Force Recommendations: Key Themes

- Availability and adoption of broadband services in rural and urban areas had a direct impact on the resilience of education, healthcare, and commerce.
- Digital capabilities and literacy were required to quickly pivot in many sectors.
- Strengthening IT subsector ecosystems (education, workforce, industry clusters and diversity).
- COVID-19 will act as a digital accelerator related to Cloud, cyber, automation, and AI.
ITC Task Force Recommendations

...where COVID-19 is still present with no vaccine or treatment options

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| **Consistency of re-opening guidelines** | • Re-opening guidelines should specifically incorporate CDC guidelines and practices; doing so will allow a consistent approach based on expert advice  
• Region-wide basis consistency for businesses with employees that travel across boundaries for work and commuting purposes |
| **IT/Communications Displaced Worker Programs** | • Continued examination of resources that can be rapidly deployed when/if technology based workers are impacted  
• Establishing support mechanisms to quickly connect impacted tech workers with other tech companies (regionally/statewide)  
• Apply a similar lens to upcoming college graduates who may experience potential downturn in demand for tech sector |
| **Spreading awareness of telecom company offerings** | • A number of technology solutions in addition to enterprise and residential high speed internet service are available to support businesses and citizens of the state as they transition to the “new normal.”  
• Not all stakeholders are fully aware of these capabilities or offerings.  
• Mechanisms to help educate the public and businesses on how these capabilities can accelerate recovery will support the overall recovery of the state’s economy. |
| **Knowledge sharing / clearinghouse capabilities** | • Various sectors noted that it would be useful to establish increased knowledge sharing/clearinghouse capabilities leveraging information technology solutions to provide access to tailored, vetted, and “single source of truth” information regarding impacts to their sector as well as re-opening guidelines  
• Applies to educational resources and knowledge around liability concerns associated with digital capabilities and data collection related to PII data collected by small businesses, as a part of re-opening guidelines  
• Engage in CX/UX Sessions and feedback related to OpenSafely.la.gov site |

Additional recommendations (Section 1C of Charge 2 Deliverable): Child-Care Services and Solutions, Wi-Fi Hotspot Finder Service, Working from Home Best Practices/Training, Liability protection
ITC Task Force Recommendations, Post COVID-19

*Strategies for resilience in the face of future stressors and shock events*

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| Cross-Sector Broadband Collaboration to address access to and awareness of broadband for everyone in Louisiana. | • Leverage existing expertise of the State of Louisiana’s Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana (BEL) Commission  
• Develop broadband adoption strategy (across providers and local communities)  
• Clearinghouse for information sharing and exchange to empower communities and citizens related to Broadband  
• Continue to explore the potential for electric cooperatives (including rural co-ops) to help address digital divide and foster economic opportunities  
• Consider streamlined permitting process  
• Work across this coalition to capitalize on new and emerging funding options (e.g. CARES Act, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction)  
• Evaluate and mitigate any Federal (e.g. USDA) eligibility criteria concerns |
### ITC Task Force Recommendations, Post COVID-19

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| **Remove Barriers to Broadband Access** | • Based on data from the FCC, 87.5 percent of Louisianans have access to Broadband; data also reflects a service adoption rate of only 45.5 percent in Louisiana  
• Rights of way and pole attachment fees can double the cost of network construction.  
• Removing impediments to deployment (such as pole attachment fees, permitting delays, franchise administration, shot clocks on requests for access and permit approvals, and access to railroad rights-of-way) will help accelerate broadband infrastructure buildout in Louisiana  
• Execute on 2020 Regular Session, HCR 77 to identify public and private sector barriers and provide recommendations to the Legislative Committee on Commerce on/before 1/1/21 |
### ITC Task Force Recommendations, Post COVID-19

*...Strategies for resilience in the face of future stressors and shock events*

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| **Marketing coalition and program focused on talent attraction for IT professionals and IT companies** | - Dual trends of IT workforce supply chains re-balancing + pre-COVID-19 trend of IT talent relocating to low cost/high quality of life areas presents an opportunity  
- Builds on existing LED and regional EDO work under way prior to the pandemic  
- Access to Talent: Strategic driver for economic growth in tech sector site selection  
- Regional EDOs could consider programs similar to Tulsa Remote |
| **Modernization of technology related economic development incentive programs** | - Continued support for successful economic development tools that have built foundation of resilient IT sector across the state  
- Target additional resilient, high demand, high growth, low supply IT occupations  
- Incorporate roles in the tech sector such as cybersecurity and cloud engineering  
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: STEM occupations have a 128% higher median wages; Example roles above have 15% higher median annual wages > Computer Programmers |
| **Cybersecurity resource capacity** | - Leverage work and support from the Louisiana Cybersecurity Commission to develop near/long term roadmaps for establishing programs that create cybersecurity capacity for sectors that need assistance (non-profits, education, government)  
- Build upon foundation of cybersecurity assets including Cyber Innovation Center in Bossier, CESARS at Louisiana Tech Research Institute, ULL's Center for Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity, Louisiana Tech / LSU Center for Secure Cyberspace, UNO Cyber Center, Grambling State University Cybersecurity program |
**Incorporate Inclusive Economic Growth incentives into new/existing economic development programs**

- Engage stakeholders to develop a long-term roadmap to orient appropriate economic development incentives in a manner that supports equitable economic opportunities
- Target demographics within Louisiana that are underrepresented in technology fields
- Incorporate research of national best practices, comprehensive stakeholder engagement, review of historic economic development incentive use, and needs of communities across the state. Ref: Example: City of Indianapolis

**Incorporate Community Impact Network concepts into existing econ dev incentives**

- Research, establish and incorporate Community Impact Network concepts at State, Regional, or Parish levels
- Designed such that businesses receiving incentives commit to supporting initiatives from a menu of inclusive economic growth or equity programs (e.g. STEM education, workforce development, internships, apprenticeships, diversity hiring/training, etc.)

**Promote and recognize equity-focused businesses**

- Model after or incorporate into Louisiana Department of Health’s Well-Ahead Louisiana Initiative
- Recognizing places and organizations that are making a conscious effort through tangible actions, to improve the diversity and inclusivity of their workplace.
# ITC Task Force Recommendations, Post COVID-19

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| **Expansion of Louisiana Procurement Technical Assistance Center program** | • Include large business partnership alliances and expertise to assist in expanding innovation ecosystems across the state.  
  • Create partnership alliances across organizations to support Louisiana based small, minority owned, diversity led businesses in obtaining and performing under federal, state, and local contracts  
  • Target innovation ecosystems that capitalize on unique strengths of Louisiana in areas pairing IT with energy, manufacturing, healthcare, coastal restoration, water mgmt. |
| **Scale registered Apprenticeship Programs for jobs in STEM fields across Louisiana.** | • Registered Apprenticeship programs represent a real tool that can assist Louisiana in addressing the diversity gap in STEM fields  
  • Pool together businesses from across the state to engage in an effort to scale out Louisiana Workforce Commission’s Registered Apprenticeship Program  
  • Builds on LWC work pre-COVID on building increased scale of IT apprenticeships |
| **Tracking progress on Equity in ITC Sector** | • Determine a set of benchmark data elements that measure diversity and inclusion within ITC Sector  
  • Research best practices for goal/objective setting related to these benchmarks, data to track, and align previous recommendations appropriately to measure progress |
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*Strategies for resilience in the face of future stressors and shock events*

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<td><strong>Creating statewide procurement coalition to maximize statewide ITC purchasing power</strong></td>
<td><em>Implement process and governance model that enables state and local governments to gather common parties to support consistent supply / procurement behaviors to leverage the scale of Louisiana communities via common buying.</em></td>
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| **Knowledge sharing / clearinghouse paired with marketplace capabilities** | *Increased knowledge sharing/clearinghouse capabilities leveraging information technology solutions to provide access to tailored, vetted, and “single source of truth” information regarding ITC resilience topics*  
*Could include pre-vetted, small or large businesses that employ Louisiana residents, who provide ecommerce, cybersecurity, training, and other services that may help Louisiana businesses* |
| **Incentive Programs to “get a game plan” for resiliency related to ITC** | *Evaluate and consider implementation of programs to incentivize small business/non-profits to "get a game plan" for resiliency related to topics such as cybersecurity, business continuity planning, digital capabilities* |
| **Automation and Artificial Intelligence economic roadmap**            | *These emerging technologies may negatively impact certain jobs, many experts believe that these forces will also create new jobs and opportunities for our residents*  
*Analyze potential impacts, assess possibilities for new opportunities (e.g. workforce retooling) across multiple sectors, build out roadmap to establish tools needed* |