

2017-2018 ConnectHome - Leveraging ISP Franchise and Exclusivity Agreements, 4-24-18

Dina Lehmann-Kim: -- housing authority and she's also the community IT project officer for the City of Seattle.

So without further ado, I'd like to pass it over to Joojo to kick things off. Thank you.

Joojo Ocran: Fantastic. I hope everyone is doing well today. And I'm just going to talk a little bit about the two main topics of conversation, which are the franchise agreement and the exclusive marketing agreement kind of frame the conversation a little bit and then pass it over to our other wonderful panelists to kind of round the conversation up with their more in-depth experiences in their individual communities.

So let's start off with franchise agreements. So franchise agreements, at their most essential, are the contract that a city or community finds with the ISP to give that ISP the legal right to operate within that city or within that community. And these agreements tends to be pretty long-term in the way they are structured.

And so it is imperative that for an agreement that is usually only negotiated every 10 to 20 years, it is important that you, as a community, as a representative of the HUD assisted housing population in your region, are able to have your views and the views and the needs of your constituents represented at the negotiating table when these agreements are finally being negotiated.

So you definitely want to be looking out for an agreement that has certain provisions, such as building out service to low-income communities to HUD-assisted housing to make sure that your residents do have service. And just another good example -- a pretty good example of a community that was able to leverage the negotiating period for a franchise agreement in Philadelphia.

So when they were renegotiating their franchise agreement with Comcast, they managed to get a number of major concessions, including an expansion of Comcast, a low-cost offer to all low-income housing with children as well as all of their older adults who were low-income. So they managed to really expand that offering.

And they also managed to get about \$500,000 to create a digital literacy fund and also managed to get a contract to agree to providing WiFi hotspots at major public institutions in Philadelphia. So those are just a couple of the different concessions and important attributes that you could be able to get when you are able to make your views represented at the negotiating table when franchise agreements are being renegotiated.

So it's just an important thing to keep an eye out on when your city is doing that. So Vicky Yuki is from Seattle, one of our ConnectHome communities and she's on the webinar. So she'll be

talking a little bit more about franchise agreements during her time. And then we're going to talk a little bit more about exclusivity agreements.

These are a little different. So exclusivity agreements are basically a contract that gives an ISP the exclusive, sole, singular, just them the right to operate without competition in a jurisdiction or community. So it's really important that before you sign an exclusivity agreement with any ISP, you do two things.

The first is to really, really consider your options in terms of seeing what other ISPs have to offer out there and seeing whether signing an exclusivity contract really is the best thing for your community and your residents. And if you, after that process, decide that it truly is, then it is imperative that once you make that determination, you try and get as much out of the agreement as possible.

So a couple of the questions you want to be asking about, you want to be asking about infrastructure build-outs to make sure that the ISPs will be serving all properties that you have if possible, you also want to ask about profit sharing agreements. You want to ask about the difficulty or otherwise of terminating the agreement.

You just want to make sure that if you do decide to go into an exclusivity agreement, that you are able to get as much out of it as possible. You also want to definitely consult legal counsel to make sure that the agreement is legally sound as well as use resources that you have at your disposal, such as reaching out to EveryoneOn, reaching out to HUD as well for help with those agreements.

So there are a couple of things you just have to keep in mind while you do that, but you will hear a little bit more from Vicky and from Jada over the course of this webinar on these two topics. And with that, I will pass it on to Jada to tell you a little bit more about franchise agreements.

Jada Johnson: Well, hello there. I'm Jada Johnson and I will be presenting from a procurement and contract perspective and also, low-income housing representing the residents for the next few minutes. So who are the players? Private services are usually negotiated as often in Arkansas as 10 years and normally who's responsible for those negotiations would be the mayor of the city and the city manager.

They outline the perimeters for where the cable and Internet services are offered and also, they look at what the customer rights and the remedies are throughout the city. The housing authority has a private agreement with one of the companies to provide Internet services to our MAK residents at all three of our site locations and this company has been with us for the last three years and is called the Broadband Development Group.

When we went into negotiate the agreements with the private developer -- the private contractor, we had to make sure that the benefits include the pricing opportunity for package expansion and also, customer service, which is really important for our residents to have when they have a number of questions and concerns about how service is running, signing up for service.

I've even had the provider to come into the location and provide an education option for the residents to sit in and learn how to connect and disconnect their service to their different locations within the building or on their cell phone or on their computers. So that was something that was kind of written into our agreement with a private provider.

Some of the disadvantages with some of the other entities that we've worked with in the past is that they require our residents to have credit approvals and sometimes our residents are not as credit savvy as they could be and they may not be eligible for participating in an open market cable system or Internet service provider as we normally would.

The ISP providers sometimes have a limited selection, which means that for a lower cost, they can't get as much as they possibly can get if we were to go with a different provider. So in some cases, when we're doing exclusivity agreements, you have to be careful, because you want to be able to provide a choice and an option for the residents.

You always want to take a look at extending the contract without increasing your rates. So those are some of the things that you want to cover on the front end. Some of the benefits of having agreements in place would be the ability to negotiate flexible resources for the residents, which is one of the things that I definitely would promote for anytime you're making a decision to have an ISP provider come into the space.

Also, solicit for your best and most responsive calls. So what that means is it may not cost the housing authority to put into place a service to provide to the residents, but how much does it cost the residents on the end. Most of the ISP providers have a promotional cost to get them in the door. Once that promotional cost and time is up, you really have to take in consideration beyond that cost.

Will the resident be able to maintain those things? Try to, as much as possible, if you can, limit the housing authority's out-of-pocket costs for repairs. That's one of the things with negotiating agreements either with a provider or with private or on the open provider market that you want to take in consideration, because wiring, at times, can be very expensive and it has to be built into the housing authority budget.

Especially, when it comes to some of the buildings that the wiring is going into unless you're doing a major rehabilitation like we may be doing -- like we're doing a hi-rise, some of the wiring is considered to be old and we all know that we have REAC that goes on in the buildings and we have to be in compliance with the REAC and sometimes cabling wire can interfere with that.

Some of the other disadvantages that you may have with your owner agreement is a long-term agreement. What that means is that once you have signed an exclusivity agreement, that means that you only have the right to be in agreement with one particular company and unless you have a clause inside of your agreement that states that there is an option to have other providers to come into the building, you literally are connected to that provider for a long period of time.

There are ways that are around those contracts. That's why we always encourage to get your attorneys or your deputy executives or things like that involved so they can help you to take a look at the long-term effect of any contract that's signed with the housing authority. Also, if the ISP provider decides that they want to expand, some of the additional infrastructure costs may be the responsibility of the housing authority.

So you have to take a good look at those contracts to make sure that if they are updating lines inside of the building, your cost is not going to go up as well. Limit of long-term savings and pricing, and I talked about that a little bit earlier. Once you sign a contract with a provider, they sometimes have the right to increase pricing and we all know that.

And as we know that the contracts are in place for about 10 years, we want to protect our residents from having to absorb those additional costs. Some of the things that I found myself shopping around for is common accessibility for the residents.

Regardless of what type of agreements you have, if it's exclusivity or a franchise agreement, there's always room that you can negotiate a great deal in our package that you can use in your common space; okay? And I say that, because at that time, you can get the best of the best. All you have to do is ask for it.

Normally, most ISP providers are willing to give the common space areas in any one of our locations kind of the best package that they have on file for a very reduced cost. So take advantage of that. And also, it gives you the ability to kind of test the service in your building. When I say test the service in a location first, try it out, see if it works.

See what the customer service is like. However you, yourself, have to deal with the installation and the customer service, that's the same experience that the residents are going to have. So you always have to take in consideration your experience, whatever it is, you're going to pass it onto the residents and we always want to give them the best experience that they can possibly can in any one of the situations.

Some of the additional options that you can add to your agreements and/or lease, all these things can be done up front, or you can ask for addendum along the way if you already have something in place. You can ask for a 30-day release clause.

As the housing authority moves into a transition of rehab, like we're doing here, we're doing the rental assistance, demonstration, that means that we will have developers and we will have private investors come in and have a piece of ownership into our building.

So I will have to expand my agreement to state that the housing authority is the current owner, but I put a clause in my contract that states that I would like to extend the service to the affiliates that may be associated with the housing authority or I will have an option to cancel this contract in 30 days and assign it to another owner per se.

Those are a little bit more detailed and you definitely want to have your attorney involved in the situation, but always leave yourself an opportunity of an out, because you may need it in the

future. Additional options that I like to take a look at is replacing some of the existing and/or some of the old equipment, because most of the buildings that we are dealing with are very old.

You always kind of want to update it and you don't want that responsibility to be yours. You would like the ISP provider, if you are signing a contract with them, to have those costs on their end. So always make sure that's up front. Incorporate your maintenance calls and line of access directly with the resident and ISP provider.

That's why I said test it out first in your building, see what your experience is, because if the residents aren't happy with the service, then most of the time they're going to go back to the managers and the managers already have a full plate. And finally, on this slide I have, to make sure that your installations are in compliance with REAC tech.

It has to be a safe installation and I'm sure most ISP providers take this in consideration, but when they're running wires through chases and holes and along different locations throughout a hi-rise building and/or the like, then sometimes they take shortcuts and it's up to us to make sure that we take a look at how these installs are and if they're in compliance with REAC.

And then that was the last thing that I had on my slide. And I'll go ahead and turn it over to Vicky. But I know I put a lot of things out there on the table for you to take in consideration and I look forward to any questions in the end.

Vicky Yuki: Thank you, Jada. My name is Vicky Yuki and I'm with the City of Seattle. I work in a group called our community technology and broadband program office within our Seattle IT department. And I'm going to speak a little bit about leveraging franchise agreements for some of our community technology strategies and what we've done.

So one of the things that I wanted to touch on here, and Joojo and Jada have talked about this, are that we have these franchise agreements that are managed through our office of cable communications within our Seattle IT department.

And so the -- and these contracts are actually negotiated every 10 years and they last for 10 years and they outline the parameters for where the cable TV services can be offered as well as what the customer rights and remedies are if those services aren't provided to citizens living in our city in a business appropriate manner.

Like we think that good customer service is important and there's often a lot of complaints from cable television customers about blackouts and things like that. And so we have built in some remedies so that when those things happen, they can get some money taken off of their bill and such. And right now we have three companies that we have agreements with and they are Comcast, Wave and CenturyLink.

Comcast has about 95 percent of the city. They cover about 95 percent of the city and Wave covers about 5 percent. So 5 to 7 percent. And then CenturyLink, actually, is a new player this go around and they, through their gigabit service or fiber, provide television service. So therefore, they fall under our franchise agreement as well.

And they're actually offered in a large part of the city, probably about 60 to 70 percent of the city CenturyLink gigabit services are offered. And so this last go around, also, that's important to note is we did away with kind of our lines, like where these providers can provide services.

And so as long as they are interested in building up infrastructure for where they provide services, they're allowed to go and actually -- so Wave can grow their area and Comcast can decide to take over the whole city and they can do that as well. But there are some nuances on how they're able to do that.

So Seattle community technology programs, our Seattle community technology programs, we manage kind of digital inclusion and digital equity efforts within the city. So basically, within the city limits and our staff is able to do this, because about 25 years ago the city made a commitment to set aside funding out of the cable franchise fees.

So franchising a portion of -- I'm sorry, that was funny; that wasn't me laughing -- and so set aside funding so that we could then have staffing to be able to do this really important work of digital inclusion work.

And so some of the things that we are able to do with -- we've been able to implement based upon our franchise agreements and those cable franchising fees is we've been able to expand and/or create low-income programs for people who are low-income, low-cost Internet.

We've been able to provide free cable and modems for nonprofits and community-based organizations who are doing digital inclusion, digital literacy work. We are able to offer cable television discounts for seniors as well as for low-income residents. And then we also are in our 21st year of offering the technology matching fund, which is paid for with these franchising dollars and that's been extremely valuable for us; you know?

I mean, that's been about a \$4 million commitment over 20 years, which has then been matched by about \$8 million. So it's put a lot of money and resources out into the community. And so that's been a huge benefit to our technology training partners as well as those who are doing refurbishment of devices to get them out the door. And then there's also additional funding for other types of digital inclusion programming.

For instance, right now we're working on a tech support pilot. You know, we are able to kind of create -- work with partners to create programs that might be addressing needs that we haven't been able to negotiate or didn't know about at the time when we were doing the franchise.

And so this is -- so basically, what we found is that as we work with -- during our franchise period, about three years before the franchise period actually ends, so about the seventh year in, we actually go and do a lot of in-depth work. We do -- we hold public meetings, we invite city partners to share what their needs are, we go through our own metrics and design what it is -- you know, research where it gaps with them.

And then we build those into kind of a research period. And once we do that, then we're able to negotiate. So like I mentioned before, Comcast has about 95 percent of the market share in Seattle. And so they have, for a long time, offered a low-income to the Internet Essentials program, a program for kids in the free or reduce lunch program.

And Joojo mentioned, for instance, that Philadelphia has created a senior pilot. And there's other communities that have done different things, other markets, but I wanted to stress that we actually look at what other cities have negotiated. And so actually, the day before we were supposed to sign our agreement with Comcast, we heard that Philadelphia was getting a senior pilot.

So we went back to the drawing board and said, we want a senior pilot in Seattle. And so it's really important kind of have those communication lines open so you can talk to your city and find out what it is they're doing. Another thing that Comcast provides is 500 cable modems for these nonprofit and community-based organizations.

And so at the time then, we say, Wave, which is a local West Coast cable provider, we asked them for 50; you know? So they're actually providing 50, because they also have a smaller market share. And so -- but we were able to negotiate that with Wave. Then the other thing that we were able to do with Wave this past year is we were able to say that you don't have a low-income program and we really want a low-income program.

And so if you would like to have this agreement -- if you'd like to sign this franchise agreement with us, we'd like you to create a low-income program. And so they did. And so they created a low-income program that I believe is offered in all their markets on the West Coast. And so that's been -- that's modeled off of the Comcast Internet Essentials program.

And they actually don't have a transition period. So if you are already a cable customer and you show that you are low-income, then you're able to immediately transition to the low-income program, which has been great. They've been a great partner in doing that.

And so my idea of best practices and things that you can do, because I'm coming at it from a city standpoint, but as a housing authority of another partner that's doing a lot of this really important work is to really -- is to start early. You know, find -- look at your evaluative measures and what it is that your community is really lacking and what it is that you'd like to see happen in your community.

And if you don't know who your city contacts are who do that, kind of research that and find that out and then approach them and say, what's your schedule like, what's your timeline like? Are you -- you know, do you have a 10-year agreement and at what point do you want to hear from us so that we can then give you our feedback and tell you what it is that we think the community needs?

We can bring community members to your offices and you can -- we can share that information directly with you. And really think outside the box; you know? I mean, I think that it's really

important to do this, because just because they're already offering certain things doesn't mean that they can't offer more.

You know, there's the community college pilots that's operating in a number of cities as well through Comcast Internet Essentials and if I'd known about that one, then I think I would've tried to push for that one as well. And so there's a lot of need in our community. And if you have a harder time, larger cities do -- as a larger city, we actually are able to get a lot of concessions.

They are not federally mandated to give you concessions, but I think if you can show that this is really -- these are what their customers need, then that's something that hopefully you're able to convince them to include as part of your franchise agreements. And so I guess at this point, I'm going to turn it back over to Dina. And thank you for taking the time to listen to what it is -- to hear what it is that we do in Seattle.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you, Vicky and thank you, Jada and Joojo. Really appreciate you presenting with us today. Now we'd like to take your questions. And Erica will remind us again how you can do that, but before she does that, I want to remind everybody that at the very end of this webinar, there is a survey for you to take to let us know how we've done; okay? So Erica, if you could just remind everybody how to submit a question.

Erica: Sure. So just sent a chat to everyone to be able to use the Q&A box. We do have one question already through the chat feature. So we're able to monitor all of them. So if you just see a dialogue box, definitely feel free to use to type in your questions. So I'll read the first one.

This is a question for Vicky. It says, "Please clarify, does Comcast provide coverage to 95 percent of Seattle or does Comcast have 95 percent of the market in Seattle?"

Vicky Yuki: That's a good distinction. So in terms of the area in which they cover, they cover 95 percent of the area. That doesn't mean that everybody in the -- in that area has Comcast services. And again, this is, again, only around cable television.

One of the other things that I wanted to bring up is that because we did away with those lines, about where these providers could be, as they expand, they -- there's a commitment that they have to also expand in areas where 30 percent are below the median income. So there's a large -- so if you want to expand to let's say, 10 areas, then 3 areas have to be below the median income.

And the median income in Seattle is basically around \$65,000 a year. So it could be different in different communities, but that's something that we got out of -- we negotiated with them, said, if you want to go into the additional 5 percent, then you have to also serve -- make a commitment to serve this other area -- the low-income areas where people are below the median income in Seattle. I hope I answered that question.

Erica: I think so. Okay. We don't have any more questions for now. But please use, again, your Q&A box to be able to submit questions or if you just want to verbalize those, please raise your hand and there's a little hand icon and your line could be unmuted.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Erica, while we're waiting, this is Dina, I do have a question for anybody who would like to answer this from our panel. "Who from the city typically negotiates these arrangements?"

Vicky Yuki: So this is Vicky with the city. So for us, it's our office of cable communications. We actually have an office, a staff of about three people who do this work.

And in between the times of the actual negotiations, because it's 10 years -- they're 10 years long and they're 3 years of really hard work right before, they're actually reviewing and ensuring that the cable companies are making -- are providing the services that they said that they would provide.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: So this is Dina again. So if a PHA wanted to learn more, who would you recommend that they would talk to or research?

Vicky Yuki: So again, I would say that they should contact their city. And I don't -- and every city -- I know that sounds [inaudible] --

Dina Lehmann-Kim: It's a little different.

Jada Johnson: No. That's different.

Vicky Yuki: -- I know, every city is different; you know? And so that's the challenge; right? And so that's why I said it does take a little bit -- it may take a little bit of research, but if they can't find it out easily, they can always contact their customer service.

There's usually a customer service bureau or there -- and they'll be able to kind of maybe redirect them where they need to go. That's how it would work in Seattle if people didn't know the contact of that group.

Jada Johnson: And one of the ways -- this is Jada. One of the ways I was able to get our contact information was by asking our Comcast representative who negotiated -- who negotiates their terms and they directed me straight to the City of Little Rock mayor's department and his staff. So it was kind of easy to find out that way.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's a good strategy too.

Vicky Yuki: That is good. That's a great way to do it.

Erica: We have one question, "Will there be PowerPoint slides available on today's webinar?" Yes. So those will be posted to the HUD Exchange as well as the ConnectHome website.

Another question; "Typically, who approves the franchise agreements, the mayor, the city council or both?"

Vicky Yuki: So in Seattle, I believe what happens is that we -- after this research and after the negotiations, there comes a tentative agreement. Then that goes to the -- that actually goes to the mayor's office, but it comes from the mayor's office, because we all work for the mayor and then the mayor then -- we then present it to city council and then they actually vote on it.

And so this year, for instance, they were not satisfied with -- I think this thing was two years ago. They were not satisfied with the -- with Comcast's concessions. And so they actually sent it back to us. And so we -- they needed to kind of firm up some items where they just weren't -- there just wasn't enough clarity. And so the council is very -- for us, the council is very instrumental in --

And they do very carefully review these agreements, because they're really trying to -- as they represent residents within the city, they want to ensure that their communities are all going to be served and served well.

Erica: All right. We have one question from Amir Stevens [ph]. I'm going to unmute you.

Shean Atkins: Hi. It's actually Shean Atkins with the Atlanta Housing Authority. I have a question. I missed the first couple of slides and perhaps, one of the panelists went over this, but perfect piggyback on the Comcast franchise agreement. When working with Comcast, I think they've got a great product with the Essentials program, but of course, there's a caveat regarding past-due balances.

"Were you able to overcome that so that you were able to serve more people and bring more people online when working with Comcast?"

Vicky Yuki: So I don't know exactly what their policy is around their traditional Xfinity program, but with the Internet Essentials, if there is debt that's over a year old -- over six months or a year, there's a -- there can't be any recent debt. And so you have to wait until that debt goes away. And I'm sorry I don't have that memorized. I used to, but I believe it's, I'll bet, under a year.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: It's a year. Yeah. I'm rereading some -- this is Dina. I'm rereading some language I received from Comcast and it says, "If the debt is over one year, regardless of the amount, the individual can still apply for Internet Essentials, but still must meet the other eligibility criteria," like receiving HUD assistance, for example.

Vicky Yuki: And also, we learned at the National Digital Inclusion Conference last week that Comcast will usually, if they're able to or if they have -- you know, this isn't something that they do -- I don't think that this is something they do as a standard, but they will often -- if the debt is over a year old, they will help to work to erase it completely from the account.

And so to help to kind of free up their ability to gain credit -- to repair their credit, I guess and that was something that they said that they would work on -- they would be able to do, but it's not an automatic thing.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Right. My information says that after 12 months of payment for the Internet Essentials service, the former debt will be forgiven. So let's say you have \$100 debt that's over a year old, you can apply for Internet Essentials and then you pay your monthly fee of \$9.95 a month for 12 months, that \$100 debt can go away.

Shean Atkins: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you, both.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Sure thing.

Erica: Okay. We have another question. "Do you know of any efforts to improve overall affordability of Internet service in a community so that specific low-income programs become unnecessary?"

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Can you repeat the question? Sorry.

Erica: Sure. "Do you know of any efforts to improve overall affordability of Internet service in a community so that specific low-income programs become unnecessary?"

Jada Johnson: I'm trying to think.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Would it be helpful if maybe Jennifer [inaudible] the question from you, to unmute Jennifer to be more specific with the question?

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Sure.

Erica: Okay. Let me do that. Jennifer is not on the phone line, but if you can dial -- if you can type in more specificity about what types of programs you're referring to.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: I think I understand the question. You know, are there efforts to help lower the cost in general of Internet service in communities around the country so that a special program, like Internet Essentials, wouldn't be necessary? And I think that's what Vicky was talking about and I'll let you speak about it, Vicky. But the program you've developed for seniors, for example.

Vicky Yuki: So this is a really good question. You know, this is one of those questions where it's like we hope, but yeah -- no. So one of the ways that we were -- that some of the citizens in Seattle were hoping to do to reduce the cost of broadband for the residents living in city was to make it a utility; right?

And so for instance, the City of Seattle manages the Seattle City Light as well as Seattle Public Utilities, which is water, sewer, garbage -- water and sewer as well as electricity are offered as a city utility. And so by offering that, the cost of -- actually, the cost of power in Seattle is much less expensive than it is in -- across the lake in Bellevue, for instance, a different city.

And so they were looking at trying to make Internet as a utility and then -- which we, actually, I think, four years ago decided not to do because of the cost of laying all that infrastructure. And

so that's kind of one solution area that we had looked at, but we decided not to do that. But we now have a different mayor, and so we'll see what happens.

But it's very expensive. And I was talking a little bit about CenturyLink and the way that they were able to kind of, over the course of like two years, really kind of cover 70 percent of the city is by actually just overlaying their phone lines; you know? And so I think the major barrier to a lot of this is actual infrastructure and build-out.

And so I personally would love to see the cost of broadband drop and really -- and this is just my personal thoughts is kind of increasing that competition to make that happen, but again, that's --

I don't think that there's currently, at least at the City of Seattle, a way other than kind of what we're able to negotiate for certain low-income communities, such as seniors or let's say, another community working with community college and such, those types of programs, but again, that was the type of low-income program that you were saying without having to have those low-income programs.

So at least for the city, I don't believe that there's anything right now that addresses reducing that cost and really more just trying to keep a cap on it so it doesn't keep growing, if that's helpful. I don't know, did I answer that? I wasn't -- I'm not sure if I got to that, but --

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah.

Vicky Yuki: But basically, I don't really think there is a huge thing right now where -- you know, until the cable -- until the ISP providers want to reduce those costs and become -- or there's just so much competition for a better product. That's why we really don't have fiber, we don't have gigabit service. It's mostly cable in Seattle other than CenturyLink's services.

Erica: Thank you, Vicky. And the person who asked the question has acknowledged that your -- you made the right assumption with answering her question. So thank you.

And we have another one. "Is the Comcast forgiveness a national policy or just in certain areas with agreements?"

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Could you say the first part of the question again?

Erica: "Is the Comcast forgiveness a national policy or just in certain areas with agreements?"

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Oh, it's a national policy.

Erica: Okay. Thank you. I don't see any more hands or any additional questions.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Well, then -- this is Dina. I will ask another question.

Vicky, how were the three providers -- I mean, I assume they were okay with having two other competitors in Seattle that also had franchise agreements. You see where I'm going? Because it's competition. So I'm just wondering how that was made possible.

Vicky Yuki: Well, when we actually -- okay. So when the Comcast franchise comes up for renewal -- when it came up for renewal, then basically, there's this open process. And so anybody who wanted to could apply. And so that became -- but really, Comcast being as strong as they are, they actually came out ahead.

And so I don't think anybody applied in competition to Comcast. And then when Wave's franchise agreement came up, they actually -- I don't know that they had competition either, because they were already here. CenturyLink came into it, because they started -- they began offering television service. And so if a company begins to offer television services, then they become included.

And this is not satellite, this is actually, I think, programs that use our utility poles. And so that's how they came in.

So actually, we're really looking forward to the next franchise agreement with CenturyLink, because now that they cover such a large area of the city, we can say, don't you want to offer this to -- how much of this can you offer to the cable broadband program, the program where we actually give modems to nonprofit organizations?

And you did away with your Internet basics programs, will you be doing that again? Will you be offering that type of a low-income program in Seattle now that you're -- you know, you've been here for a while? Part of it was that they came in and there's no real clarity on what it is -- how many people they were serving. And so how many customers they have.

But once they come -- the next -- by the time the next franchise agreement period comes up for them, then that will most likely begin some stronger negotiations around different types of concessions around serving people who are low-income.

And so they basically come online, because they're beginning to offer -- they come on as a player and they're offering cable television services. So that's how we have three now. We used to only have two.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Okay. Thanks. Jada, I don't know if you have anything to add to that.

Jada Johnson: No. I did hear what she said and I kind of agree. It's pretty much the same across the board.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Okay. Joojo, anything you want to add?

Joojo Ocran: No. I think I've covered what I needed to. And [inaudible] Vicky and Jada were wonderful. Thank you guys all for coming.

Vicky Yuki: Thank you. Actually, I'm just kind of curious, I don't know if you can do this -- I'm interested in kind of -- I don't know if they have a polling feature on here or something, but I'm just curious like how many the 18 -- 20 attendees that are on representing different cities and different municipalities.

I mean, from the public housing side, how many have actually -- do actually work with their city in terms of looking at different ways in which to free up some of the resources or create opportunity through these types of franchise agreements. I'm just curious like if people are aware of it or if they -- or if this is all like new information, but I don't know if you can really do a poll [inaudible].

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. I mean, some systems allow that. Do -- I don't know if this one -- I think you have to pre-load them on, but we could ask people to chat -- to put something in the chat box and let us know that way.

Erica: Right. Dina, we don't have the poll feature on this version, but yeah, we would just need to receive that via chat or the Q&A box.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Okay. So if anybody knows whether they're working with the city on these types of issues, feel free to let us know, type it in the chat box or the Q&A box. I don't see anything coming -- I mean, I don't know, Erica, do you see anything coming through?

Erica: No. But I did find the polling feature. So let me create that so people can answer. There are now multiple options. So question, short answer -- all right. Dina, what'd you like the question to be?

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Well, Vicky, you ask it.

Vicky Yuki: Okay. I'm just curious as to how many people -- participants who are attending this webinar how -- are connected with their cities in terms of working to find ways in which to increase digital inclusion efforts through franchise agreements. Like have you -- are you knowledgeable of them? Do you work with your cities and such to do that?

Erica: Okay. So I just sent it out.

Vicky Yuki: Oh, that's cool. I got it too.

Erica: Oh, okay. It worked.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: We're trying new interactive features today, everyone.

Erica: Yeah. [inaudible]. Just as an FYI, it -- there is a countdown. You get five minutes to answer the question. So that's a cool feature too.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Oh, I see it. Okay.

Erica: Okay. We have one answer so far. So we'll give it another minute. I don't know if we want to take five minutes to answer the question. So I can [inaudible] with this poll a little bit.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Does -- Jada or Vicky, do you have any other tips that you might want to offer to people who might be starting to -- down this road?

Jada Johnson: The tip that I can offer is don't be afraid to ask for whatever it is that they feel that the residents are in need of. Even though there are different agreements that are put in place, there are always room to make the agreement fit what the agency is looking for.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's a great point.

Vicky Yuki: I also have another too where if your franchise agreements aren't up for renewal or if you don't -- you know, you're -- that's just kind of like an extra step you just are not at the place where you can take, I would still get in touch with your ISP providers and -- who do have franchises maybe with your city, because if -- and then -- because sometimes they'll do stuff locally that they're not willing to kind of put into a franchise agreement.

You know, the franchise agreement is 10 years long, it's quite specific. If they don't do something, again, there's financial remedies attached to those. And so sometimes they just are not wanting to do that, but they may be able to find additional funding or free up some resources to be able to meet some of those needs.

And so I've found really good success working locally with our Comcast office and then also with our Wave office as well. And CenturyLink was a great player when they had their low-income program. They really were trying to get out there to do more sign-up events and such. And so sometimes they'll do something.

And then they worked with the low-income housing community, not necessarily the public housing, but they completely provided all the infrastructure for that community, but that wasn't built into their agreement. But once the agreement's signed, you're no longer adversarial. You know, they're working together with you, because they really want to make their program successful as well.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's a really good tip too. Yeah. As I've spoken to ConnectHome communities around the country, I've heard differences among what the local offices or arms of these big companies are doing and it's really interesting.

Erica: I have a question for everyone. Did everyone see the results of the poll? I hit a button that said share it, but wasn't sure if that was available for viewing.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: I don't see it.

Vicky Yuki: I don't see it either.

Erica: Okay. We did get a response from Atlanta, that AHA works with the City of Atlanta regarding expanding Internet connectivity to low-income households. So that was one of the typed-in responses.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Go Atlanta. Okay. Well, there aren't any more questions; right, Erica?

Erica: No more questions at this time.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Okay. Well, on that note then, I'd like to thank our wonderful presenters for being with us today and sharing their expertise with us and also, all of the attendees, thanks for joining. We really appreciate it. I want to remind you that after this screen goes away, there will be another screen. There's a momentary delay, but you'll see a survey. We'd love for you to fill it out. It shouldn't take very long at all.

And stay tuned for an announcement regarding our upcoming webinar in May, which will cover devices. So we look forward to seeing you back in a month. Thank you so much. Bye.

Vicky Yuki: Great. Thank you.

(END)