

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Best Estimate: FBA, Cartesian Model Tries to Find High-Cost Threshold

With the industry inching ever closer to the distribution of BEAD funding, associations and consultants are burning the midnight oil to develop tools and processes for ensuring states are developing plans that funnel money to the right places.

Take the **Fiber Broadband Association's** BEAD Threshold Financial Model, a tool designed in partnership with **Cartesian**. The model, announced last week during the association's Fiber Connect conference, aims to assist state broadband officers and others in similar roles in determining the threshold at which a state or territory would be allowed to consider other technologies to reach locations and get the most for their BEAD money.

That Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold is viewed by many as the key to maximizing federally-funded fiber deployments while ensuring as many unserved and underserved locations as possible are served with robust broadband service.

The model at this point provides averages that can be used for estimations, but it will be up to individual states to input more specific data points like eligible locations, the distance of fiber that will be required to reach those locations and the average cost of fiber construction per mile to reach those locations.

"We gave you averages, but states are going to have to dig into the details. So what we've done is sort of given the setup for the states now to go out and collect this information about build costs and the like and their objectives and put that into the model," **Kelley Drye & Warren** Partner *Tom Cohen* said

during a webinar Wednesday on how to use the tool.

A major question from attendees was how the model accounts for current levels of inflation and other costs that have exploded over the past few years. Earlier this month, a group known as the **Coalition of RDOF Winners** asked the **FCC** to release additional funding to providers to help cover the major increases in deployment costs that have become a reality since the auction wrapped up in 2020. They claimed that the impacts of the pandemic and the rise in broadband deployment funding programs have caused a skyrocketing in construction costs at a minimum of 30%, but sometimes by as much as 100-300%.

Cartesian VP *Michael Dargue* and his team did their best to account for the shifting macroeconomic environment, but it's important to remember the model isn't perfect and finetuning will be a part of the process moving forward.

"The benchmark cost inputs were uplifted. Some of them were historical numbers, so we uplifted those to reflect current inflation. But the numbers will vary by location," he said. "It's definitely something people should play with and input the numbers which they feel are the most appropriate for their local situation."

Another factor to consider is the **Department of Labor's** decision to update the Davis-Bacon Act earlier this month to better reflect the modern needs of construction works on federal construction investments. The updates are designed to streamline the process for setting and enforcing wage rates on federally funded construction projects, and Cohen said some believe the updates will inflate labor costs, one of the

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“Again, we’ve put out the model. States now can take that and get an idea of what they think are the higher costs by surveying everybody and plug that in,” Cohen said.

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CNN WELCOMES MARK THOMPSON AS NEW CHIEF

CNN is getting a new head honcho in media veteran *Mark Thompson*, who has been appointed Chairman/CEO, CNN Worldwide. The appointment will be effective on Oct. 9. Thompson, who has served as Chairman of **Ancestry** since December 2020, has more than 40 years of experience in newsrooms around the globe, being knighted for services to media during King Charles’s Birthday Honours in June. He led the *New York Times* as CEO/President from 2012-2020, guiding it through a digital transformation and pushing the outlet into podcasting and features in areas like cooking and gaming. As Director-General of the **BBC** from 2004-2012, he led the development of the BBC iPlayer while overseeing coverage of events like the 2009 financial crisis and the 2012 London Olympics. Before rising to the ranks of senior leadership, Thompson was a working researcher, director, field producer and award-winning showrunner in BBC’s news division. With someone new in the top spot, those making up the interim leadership team are returning to business as usual. EVP, Talent and Content Development *Amy Entelis*; COO *David Leavy*; CNN U.S. EVP, Editorial *Virginia Moseley*; and EVP, U.S. Programming *Eric Sherling* will continue in their functional roles, reporting to Thompson.

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HURRICANE IDALIA UPDATE

It’s hurricane season once again in the U.S., and Hurricane Idalia has cable operators and customers in the southeast hunkering down as the storm made landfall in Florida’s Gulf Coast early Wednesday. As of 2pm, there were over 270,000 power outages reported in the state. **Comcast** opened 141,000 public Xfinity WiFi hotspots in areas it serves in Florida and approximately 274,000 hotspots throughout the Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina, areas. Those are free to use for all, including non-Xfinity customers. Comcast has also positioned emergency generators and fuel trucks in Augusta, Georgia, to respond quickly to any damage once the storm clears the area. While certain areas within Comcast’s footprint are without power and therefore without Xfinity services, any restoration procedures will have to wait until water has receded. “We are seeing significant flooding from storm surges in the hardest hit areas and we will need to ensure that the water has receded before our restoration crews are able to assess any outages and restore services,” a company spokesperson told **CFX**. “Lastly, we coordinate very closely with the power companies so

The WHO and the WHY

CFX’s spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



MEG Hall
SVP, CORPORATE SOFTWARE CHARTER

3 THINGS TO KNOW

- Meg’s new role will have her head up the systems and teams that power the company’s ordering, provisioning, telemetry, mobile, corporate and desktop systems. Meg will report to EVP, Software Development and IT Jake Perlman.
- She joined Charter in 2016 and initially managed the end-to-end software delivery of programs like Spectrum Guide, cloud DVR and portal consolidation. Her purview grew three years later to include oversight of technology delivery of advanced WiFi software to Spectrum customers. After another three-year period, she was upped to her most recent position of GVP, Mobile & Enterprise, and led software development and production operations for the mobile back office and Spectrum Enterprise.
- Prior to Charter, Meg spent over 15 years at CenturyLink and climbed to Senior Director in IT. She also worked in product development for the integration and API management platform webMethods and had a seven-year stint at Accenture from 1992-1999. Meg earned her Bachelor’s in Management Information Systems from the University of Virginia.

that our teams can repair any damage or downed lines once the power companies have been able to restore power.” **Verizon** said its network was intact as of Wednesday morning, but certain sites are out of service in the Big Bend region. Other areas are still online and running on generator power, and the company is working with vendor partners to staff two wireless Emergency Operations Centers. Once safe, Verizon’s Frontline Crisis Response Team is on standby to help restore impacted areas. **WOW!** hasn’t had any of its facilities impacted by the storm so far, including its data center in Tampa. However, the company’s Network Operations Center is keeping an eye on the storm’s trajectory as it moves toward WOW!’s service area in Charleston. **Mediacom** systems in Florida have fared well, but it is dealing with outages related to the loss of commercial power in some of its southern Georgia systems.

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GOOGLE FIBER ON A ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Google Fiber is expanding once again, announcing plans to come to Wheat Ridge, Colorado. The City Council unanimously passed

an agreement Monday allowing the provider to deliver broadband to residents and businesses. Wheat Ridge is Google Fiber's third FTTH city in Colorado, joining Lakewood and Westminster. Construction is expected to begin in 2024.

PRUDENTIAL EXTENDS ROSE BOWL SPONSORSHIP

Disney Advertising and Prudential Financial extended their agreement for Prudential to remain the presenting sponsor for the Rose Bowl. The deal will go through the 2025-26 college football season. This year, the Rose Bowl will serve as a College Football Playoff semifinal on January 1, 2024, and air across **ESPN** platforms. It's the final year of the current CFP structure before it expands to 12 teams. Prudential will also sponsor the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, a series of events that precede the Rose Bowl game.

CW AFFILIATION CHANGES

Gray Television is extending its network affiliation agreement with **The CW Network**, and it's adding more markets as part of the new deal. Financial terms weren't disclosed, but Gray will add carriage of CW programming in 42 markets on top of the 13 covered by the previous agreement. Come September 2, Gray will launch CW on Atlanta's PeachtreeTV (WPCH-TV). Meanwhile, CBS said its eight CW-affiliated channels will shift to independent stations come Friday. KBCW-TV in San Francisco will change its call letters to KPYX and WPCW in Pittsburgh will change its call letters to WPKD-TV. Seven of the new independent stations will air CBS News' "48 Hours" in primetime starting Sept. 11.

ACAC SHAKE-UP PART 2

ACA Connects is promoting three staff members, effective Thursday, in a [second wave of personnel changes](#) in recent weeks. *Stacey Leech* will become VP, Member Services, directing the association's daily interactions with members while also managing partnerships and membership events. She previously served as Senior Director, Meetings & Industry Affairs. *Tomeika Slappy*, longtime Executive Assistant to the CEO, will add Manager, Member Services to her existing duties with a focus on increasing participation in membership events and database management. *Nathan Penrod* has been upped to Director, Digital and Social Media, overseeing the development of ACAC material across various mediums and highlighting its advocacy. VP, Communications *Ted Hearn* and Grassroots Manager *Caroline Persinger* exited the association in recent weeks.

TELEVISION UNIVISION RE-TOOLS LOCAL AD SALES UNIT

TelevisaUnivision is giving its local ad sales team a new structure in an effort for more alignment and efficiency for clients. The organization will have three specific units: Holding

Company, Multi-Market and Local Sales. The Holding Company Unit will be led by SVP, Local Media Sales *Mariana Ferro* and continue collaborating with media agencies with a targeted approach. The new Multi-Market Unit will cover eight regions, including the top six Hispanic DMAs: LA, NY, Miami, Houston, Dallas, Chicago, San Francisco and Atlanta.

AWARDS

The **National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences** revealed the 2023 Gold and Silver Circle Inductees, an honor society recognizing professionals who have performed distinguished service within the television industry, setting standards for achievement, mentoring, leadership and professional accolades for 50 or 25 years, respectively. The Gold Circle news honorees includes journalist *Dan Rather*, **CBS News** correspondent *David Martin* and **ABC News** correspondent *John Quiñones*. The Silver news inductees include **CNBC** SVP, Operations *Steve Fastook*, ABC News President *Kim Godwin*, CBS News exec producer *Rand Morrison*, ABC News correspondent *Steve Osunsami*, **NBC News** editor *Thomas Snowden* and *Otto Padron*, head of **Meruleo Media** and a member of the **FCC's** Communications, Equity & Diversity Counsel

HOCKEY IS COMING

The start of the 2023-24 **NHL** season is near. 100 exclusive games will air across **ESPN**, **ESPN+**, **ABC** and **Hulu**. It'll start Oct. 10 with a tripleheader on ESPN and ESPN+. The NHL All-Star Weekend will take place Feb. 2-3. The Stanley Cup will cap the season on ABC and ESPN+ in June. Also coming this season is a new studio show "The Point," which will premiere Oct. 10 on ESPN. **Warner Bros. Discovery** also revealed its slate of NHL games on **TNT**. It'll have 62 regular-season games throughout the year. Starting Feb. 25, it'll have Sunday afternoon telecasts through the end of the season. Other highlights include the 2024 Winter Classic on New Year's Day and regular live-game coverage on Wednesday nights.

PEOPLE

NBCUniversal is taking the interim tag off *Mark Marshall's* title, officially naming him Chairman, Global Advertising and Partnerships. He'll report to NBCU Media Group Chairman *Mark Lazarus*. Marshall was named interim Chairman, Advertising Sales and Partnerships in May following the [departure](#) of *Linda Yaccarino* to **Twitter** (now **X**). He guided the NBCU ad sales team through this year's upfront, which despite economic headwinds closed the year with cash commitments in line with 2022's upfront. – *Tom Maguire* will be the next CEO of **Brightspeed**, filling in for *Bob Mudge* who will shift into the role of Executive Chair of the board. Maguire—who's currently the company's COO—will have his role taken by *Manuel Sampedro*. All changes are effective Nov. 1. Maguire has over 40 years of experience in telecommunications, starting as a field technician and climbing through leadership roles at **Verizon**. Sampedro is also a former Verizon employee, having most recently served as SVP, Business Transformation.

Think about that for a minute...

Know When To Stop

Commentary by Steve Effros

I got a haircut the other day. Yes, I'm one of the lucky ones..77 and it still grows! I've been going to the same stylist to cut my hair for years. She does, I think, a very good job or I wouldn't have been coming back each month. But for some reason the powers that be at the place she works haven't seemed to figure that out. Every month, and this one was no exception, my "new text message" alert sounds on my cell phone, usually before I get out of the shop. You know why. It's a "survey" asking me how I liked the service I was getting, and wanting me to fill out a "1 to 5" rating series of questions so that the shop can "better serve me."

Well, as I've told them many times, the best way they could serve me is to stop bothering me every darn time I use their services! They know, or they should know, that I already have date and time appointments with this lady to cut my hair going through the end of December! Isn't that enough? Don't you think they could deduce that I'm satisfied with the service because of that? Why, oh why, do they think it's a good idea to harass me with what I consider at this point to be spam texts asking, and then reminding me they asked if I don't respond, a set of questions they should already know the answers to? I just think it's an abuse of my time.

And that's the point here. I'm confident that many of you have had the same experience. It may not be about a haircut, it's likely to be just about any service you receive. Doctor's offices seem to be particularly prone to this. The "survey" trend has gotten totally out of hand and it's eventually going to induce customers to go elsewhere. Don't let that happen to you.

To be sure, anyone offering services, and the cable/broadband/cellular business does that a lot, wants to make sure its employees do a good job, that its customers are satisfied, and that if there are things that can be improved, they will be if someone lets us know. I'm not saying that we shouldn't ask, or that we shouldn't be diligent about providing the best service we can. But there are limits.

Instituting automated systems that trigger texts or emails asking the same questions over and over any time a standardized service is provided goes beyond those limits. It's an abuse of a useful technology because those using it have failed to do something I preach in this column all the time: use it yourself first! See how you like it. See if it, whatever it is, makes you feel better about your experience with the company or whether it ultimately becomes intrusive. If the latter, obviously don't unleash it on your customer base!

Yes, I know, there are entire industry segments geared toward convincing you to constantly monitor the services you are offering and the satisfaction rating of the folks you serve. But I think this just falls into the same category as those other things I keep bringing up, like the "paradox of choice" which has now resulted in our customers suffering from so much choice a new study suggests 20 percent of potential viewers just give up and don't watch anything that night because there's just too much choice to wade through and make a decision about.

That goes to the much harder issue of the industry agreeing on a cooperative effort to allow for a unified search function and a rational user interface. But that's an issue for another time. For now, the message is simple: know when to stop!



Steve

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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)



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