Wisconsin Broadband Summit

November 16, 2021

Community Development Institute

Division of Extension

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Sponsored by

Today's meeting was made possible by a grant from the
United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration
in support of the
Economic Development Administration University Center
at the
Community Development Institute
Division of Extension
University of Wisconsin-Madison.

*Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations are those of the presenters
and do not necessarily reflect the views of the
U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration*

Enhancing Broadband Access in Wisconsin

Brittany Beyer
Executive Director, Grow North
Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access

Wisconsin Broadband Summit

Enhancing Broadband Access in Wisconsin

November 16, 2021

Brittany Beyer,

Executive Director, Grow North

Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband

Brittany Beyer

GROW NORTH
Regional Economic Development Corporation

- Director of Grow North: overseeing 8 counties and 3 Tribal Nations in the Northwoods (one of the 9 regions of economic development in state)

- Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity

- Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband

Governor's Task Force on Broadband

- Named in July 2020 via executive order by the Governor. Report due to the legislature. Delivered June 30, 2021

- Governor Evers named 2021 "Year of Broadband Access"

- 25 members met August 2020-May 2021. Work to resume in the fall 2021

  - subcommittees on policy, funding, mapping and data, community network building, and digital access

PSC Broadband Plan:

Stated Goals

- **Resilient** *Every Wisconsin community will have access to at least 1 gigabit per second symmetrical broadband service to anchor institutions such as schools, hospitals, government buildings, business parks, and enterprise centers by 2024.*

- **Accessible:** 97% of Wisconsin homes and businesses will have access to at least one internet service with minimum speeds of 25 megabits download / 3 megabits upload (25/3 Mbps) by 2025.

- **Affordable** 75% of households with income below 200% of the federal poverty level have access to fixed home internet service at a cost of less than $25/ month by 2025.

- **High Performance** 75% of Wisconsin homes and businesses will have access to at least one internet service with a minimum speed 100/20 Mbps with preference on symmetrical service, no usage limits and latency low enough to run interactive video applications by 2025.

Closing the Broadband Gap:

KEY ISSUES from first Report

- The 3 A's: ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, ADOPTABILITY
- Speed goals, mapping improvements, and FUNDING
- NETWORK of collaborative efforts is being built NOW. You can be part of this!

Top Recommendations from the Task Force on Broadband's Report

- Explore hybrid models of broadband infrastructure development- public/private partnerships

- *Increase construction and permitting coordination*

- Increase Broadband Expansion Grant funding

- Collect internet data from all ISP's at a household and business level of granularity

- *Increase broadband consumer protections and pricing transparency*

- *Establish a State Internet Assistance Program*

- *Establish a statewide Digital Equity Fund*

- Assess broadband adoption and lack of adoption among households not connecting- cost, need, barriers

- Increase funding for broadband administration

- *Establish a coalition of willing, engaged broadband leaders to connect communities and providers, local and regional partners, planning and technical assistance opportunities, funding, and resources*

- *Create planning and implementation grants for regions and communities*

Closing the Broadband Gap:

The 3 "A's"

- **ACCESS**: infrastructure is absent or cost of connection is unaffordable or does not deliver speeds necessary

- **AFFORDABILITY**: cost is too high because of income OR cost of expensive connection

- **ADOPTION**: lack of access and training on equipment to use without issue

Solutions for Closing the Gap (Urban and Rural) in Broadband: the 3 "A's"

ACCESS

- Grants need to be available to make the private investment work- especially in rural areas
- Needs new NETWORKS of support to address this on a local level
- Blessing of COVID- understood as cross-cutting need to enter 21st Century equitably

AFFORDABILIY

- Emergency Broadband Benefit- available right now (FCC)
- More competitive with choice between providers (absent in some places)
- Department of Public Instruction and other agencies will continue to rise to the occasion

ADOPTABILITY

- Create a Digital opportunity fund (room for philanthropy to amplify funds)
- Digital navigators- some grass roots orgs are already doing this. Can we make this statewide?
- Clear racial, equity, and inclusion issue. ALL Wisconsinites need access and to be able to use Broadband
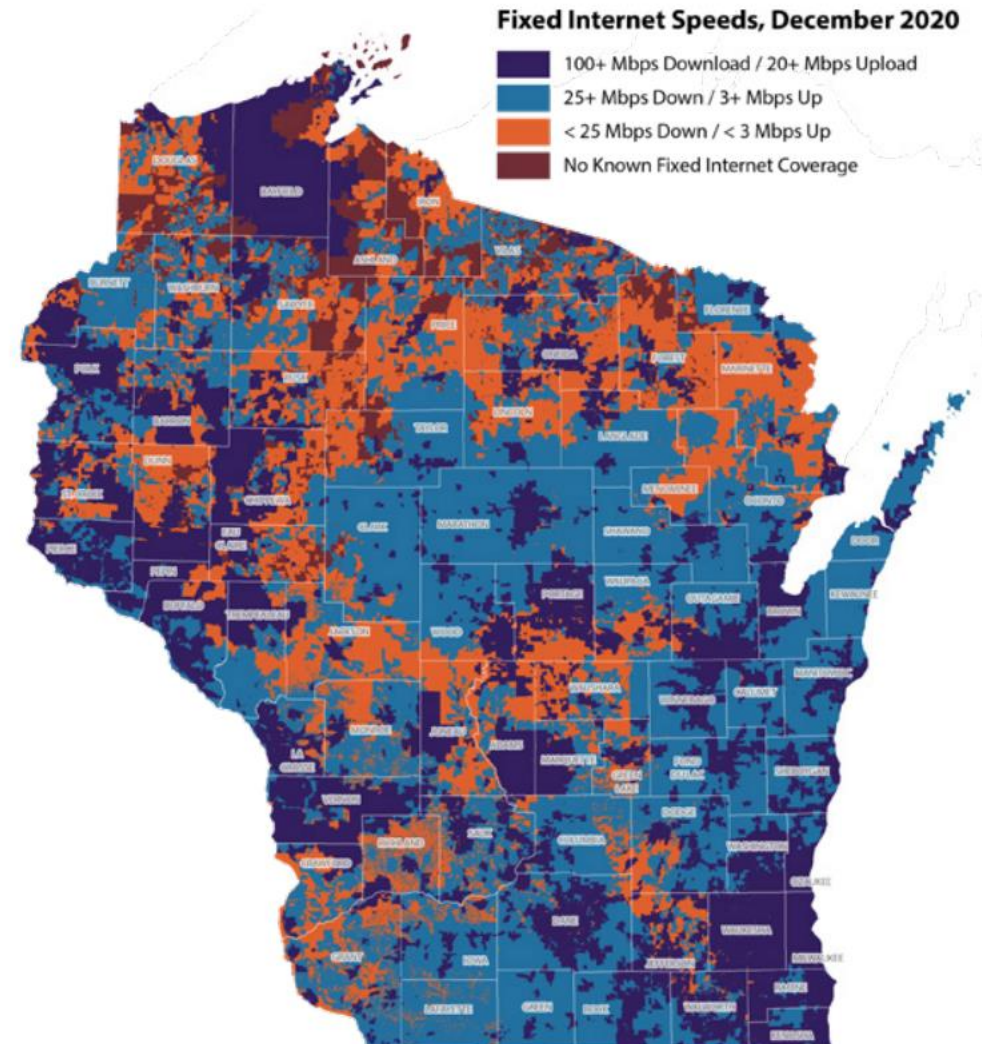
Closing the Broadband Gap:

Proposed Speed Goals

- Acceptable **base level** of Broadband speed received:
  - **By 2025**, **25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload (Governor's goal)**
  - **By 2028**, **50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload**
  - **By 2031, 100 Mbps download and 50 Mbps upload**
- In near future, 1Gbps+ is necessary
  - **Currently: 17.7% of state has access to 1Gbps**
  - **By 2025, 50% of the state has access to 1Gbps**
  - **By 2030, 90% of the state has access to 1Gbps**

Closing the Rural Broadband Gap: Mapping

- FCC maps allow for a provider to claim full census blocks if ONE residence is served

- Census blocks in rural areas are much larger

- Mechanisms for verifying speeds noted by providers are not in place

Fixed Internet Speeds, December 2020

- 100+ Mbps Download / 20+ Mbps Upload
- 25+ Mbps Down / 3+ Mbps Up
- < 25 Mbps Down / < 3 Mbps Up
- No Known Fixed Internet Coverage

Wisconsin Broadband Office, Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, June 2021
Data derived from ISPs, the FCC, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Closing the Broadband Gap: MAPPING

- FCC is currently refining its mapping – March 2020 congress pushed for better measures from FCC. Unclear on the date it will be released

- Local Innovation: County level and state GIS mapping work; Publicly available data layers

- What is your county, region doing to work on this issue?

Closing the Broadband Gap:

Funding for infrastructure buildout

- Providers say: the areas that have clear return on investment have been served
- Public dollars needed to close the gap. State and Federal programs
- These are complex, multi-million dollar projects
- Public-Private partnerships, municipal broadband, etc. are part of the answer

Funding for infrastructure buildout

State

APRA related $100 Million grant cycle (funded projects announced)
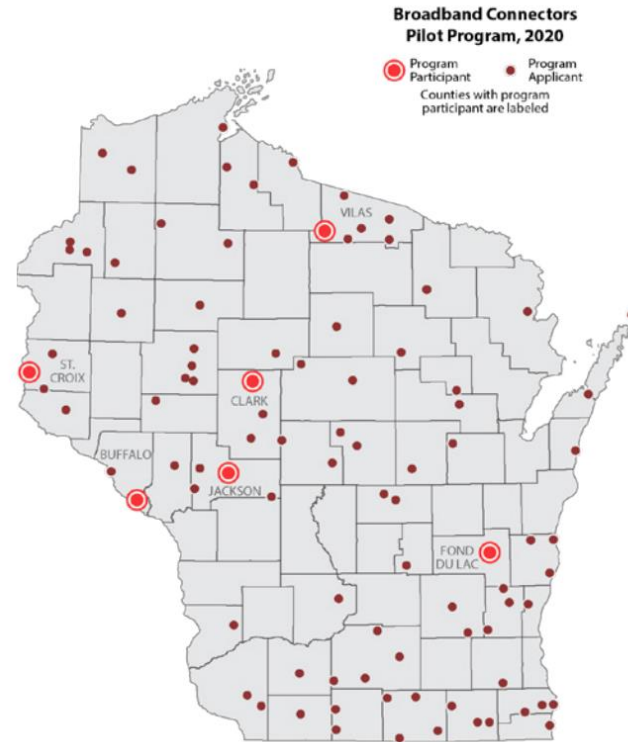
$129 Million in state budget ('21-'23)

Federal

Existing / regular channels: USDA, FCC (RDOF), NTIA

COVID and New: ARPA, Infrastructure Bill

- Federal project management in rural communities: make sure expertise is present to manage (see network building)

- Area to support: stack state grant dollars with federal grant dollars for projects (when appropriate)

Closing the Broadband Gap:

Network Building

Broadband Connectors Pilot Program, 2020

⊙ Program Participant   • Program Applicant

Counties with program participant are labeled

VILAS

ST. CROIX

CLARK

BUFFALO

JACKSON

FOND DU LAC

Wisconsin Broadband Office, Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, June 2021
Data derived from program applicants and participants.

➧ Fall of 2020, WEDC and PSC jointly ran a Broadband Connectors Pilot

➧ 96 communities applied in a two week window; 6 communities selected

➧ We're watching what is working in other states and learning: technical assistance and training, comprehensive planning grants, collaborative learning, matchmaking, etc.

Closing the Broadband Gap:

In closing

- Real work still ahead to close the gaps- active participation
- Find out who is already working on this- county level (ideal partner for towns), regional planning commission, regional economic development, etc.
- This situation is not unique to Wisconsin- we have many items stacked in our favor
- Grant funded projects are a major way to support the buildout

Questions ?

Thank you ~

Brittany Beyer
Chair, Governor's Task Force on Broadband
Executive Director, Grow North
bbeyer@grownorth.org

Wisconsin Broadband Summit

November 16, 2021

Community Development Institute

Division of Extension

University of Wisconsin-Madison