



# The Ho-Chunk Nation addresses the complexities of delivering broadband across widespread geographic locations.

## Situation

The Ho-Chunk Nation, a Native American tribe, spans 14 counties in Wisconsin, along with communities in Minnesota and Illinois. Their challenge lies in establishing equitable broadband service across these geographically dispersed areas. Unlike counties, the Ho-Chunk Nation does not have a single geographic boundary but is spread out, making it complex to navigate various Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and county jurisdictions.

The average internet speed within tribal communities is at best 12mbps upload/3mbps download, averaging 7mbps upload/3mbps download, significantly impacting healthcare, distance learning, and telecommuting opportunities. Despite county and state initiatives to expand rural broadband service in Wisconsin, the Ho-Chunk communities remain essentially landlocked due to their geographical dispersion. This situation highlights the complexities of providing essential services to geographically scattered communities and the ongoing struggle for digital equity among the Ho-Chunk Nation.

## Response

Right from the start, project leaders had a clear understanding of the importance of fostering relationships with local entities such as Jackson County and local towns. The project leaders also leaned on the support of their legislative body for leadership and decision-making. Here's what they did:

**Building Relationships:** In the project's early stages, the Ho-Chunk Nation emphasized fostering relationships with local entities. Key partners included Jackson County, Clark, Wood, and Monroe counties and local towns. These relationships were crucial for decision-making processes, especially in selecting the right ISPs to ensure complementary broadband services. Discussions centered around core objectives related to broadband connectivity.

**Legislative Support:** The project received strong support from their legislative body and the President, who provided strategic direction. A significant step involved working with their legislature on FCC fabric layer mapping. This mapping captured the real situation on trust lands and reservation lands.

**Minimum Broadband Standard:** As a sovereign government, the Ho-Chunk Nation had to navigate interstate transmission regulations at federal, state, and local levels. Through this process, they decided to set 1 gig synchronous as their minimum broadband standard, aiming to stay ahead of the curve in terms of where the FCC is heading with minimum broadband speeds.

## Outcomes and Lessons Learned

The Ho-Chunk Nation's proactive approach serves as a model for strategic partnerships and community-focused efforts. Their broadband initiative demonstrates inclusivity, emphasizing connectivity for all, and aims to address broadband as a necessity rather than merely a financial investment.

- **Inclusive Approach:** The project's unique aspect was its inclusivity. While working with Jackson County, the focus extended beyond tribal communities. The goal was to achieve connectivity for everyone, including non-tribal members residing on county land. The project prioritized addressing broadband as a necessity as a driving principle rather than solely focusing on return on investment or the number of passings.
- **NTIA Grant Application:** Currently, the project has applied for an NTIA grant. If successful, this grant will enable the deployment of approximately 76 miles of fiber—a significant milestone in the project's journey.

## Learn More

Contact information to come!

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