



# *Addressing Broadband Challenges in Dane County: The Role of the Broadband Task Force, Consultant, and County Broadband Coordinator*

## *Situation*

Dane County, perceived as an urban area, faced significant challenges in expanding broadband access and affordability. Despite its urban reputation, many areas within the county were unserved or underserved. Reliable and affordable broadband access is critical for these communities. To address these concerns, the County established a Broadband Task Force in 2021. Although the Task Force was extremely dedicated, they realized they needed to seek the expertise of other professionals to complete their task.

## *Response*

To tackle the broadband issues, Dane County implemented several key actions:

1. **Broadband Task Force:** The County established a task force to study the issue and make recommendations. They conducted surveys, brought in subject matter experts, and produced reports.
2. **Broadband Consultant:** A Consultant was hired to perform an engineering assessment of the county and advocate for the creation of the Broadband Coordinator position.
3. **Community Engagement:** The County Broadband Coordinator worked with local leaders and elected officials, particularly those from rural areas, to address broadband needs.
4. **Utilization of ARPA Funds:** Federal funds were used to hire a County Broadband Coordinator as a project position, which later became a permanent role.

## *Outcomes*

The efforts led to several positive outcomes:

- **Strategic Planning and Reports:** The task force and consultant produced valuable reports and strategic plans to guide broadband expansion.
- **Creation of the Broadband Coordinator Position:** The Broadband Coordinator position was established in 2023. The County was fortunate to hire a coordinator with extensive broadband expertise and a strong relationship network which allowed the efforts to proceed quickly.
- **Increased Awareness and Advocacy:** Elected Officials and broadband champions effectively advocated for the need for dedicated staff and resources.
- **Improved Understanding of Broadband Needs:** The County has identified unserved and underserved areas and is emphasizing the importance of reliable and affordable access to those areas.

## *Lessons Learned*

Several key lessons emerged from this initiative:

- **The Importance of Dedicated Leadership:** Having a Broadband Coordinator with specific expertise and relationships was crucial for addressing broadband challenges.

- **Community Engagement:** Engaging local leaders and elected officials, especially those from rural areas, was essential for gaining support and understanding the county's broadband needs.
- **Effective Use of Federal Funds:** Utilizing ARPA funds facilitated the hiring of dedicated staff, which was pivotal for the initiative's success.
- **Due Diligence in Hiring Consultants:** Ensuring clear deliverables, timelines, and expectations when hiring consultants is vital for avoiding misunderstandings and ensuring project success.

This case study highlights the importance of dedicated leadership, community engagement, strategic planning, and effective use of federal funds in addressing broadband challenges in Dane County. The County Broadband Coordinator was pivotal in driving these efforts forward, leveraging his expertise and relationships to make considerable progress.

### ***Learn More***

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