



The Role State Agencies Play in Bridging the Digital Divide

Speaker Series Session
July 13, 2022



Speaker Series Overview

- Alliant Energy launched its speaker series in the Fall of 2021 in an effort to engage key stakeholders in a series of discussions on expanding access to broadband and digital opportunity in some of the Midwest's most digitally challenged rural communities.
- **Why it matters?**
 - **On average, 67 percent of Alliant Energy customers in Wisconsin and 75 percent of customers in Iowa lack sufficient access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet service.**
 - This digital divide is hindering our customers' ability to effectively engage in remote work, remote learning and telehealth due to gaps in infrastructure access, affordability, device ownership and digital literacy. The result: they are often disconnected from educational and economic opportunities in today's increasingly digital world.



Today's discussion

As part of this webinar series, today's speakers will highlight the initiatives and actions their state agencies are taking to help bridge the digital divide. They will also share an overview of the areas they focus on and the partnerships they've formed with the private sector.



Panelists

- **Alyssa Kenney**, State Broadband and Digital Equity Director for the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
- **Matt Behrens, Ph.D., MBA**, Interim Chief Information Officer for the State of Iowa
- **Liesl Seabert**, Rural Community Revitalization Program Manager within the Center for Rural Revitalization at Iowa Economic Development Authority



*How state agencies are
helping to bridge the digital
divide?*

Public Service Commission
Wisconsin Broadband Office

Wisconsin Broadband Office Vision and Mission

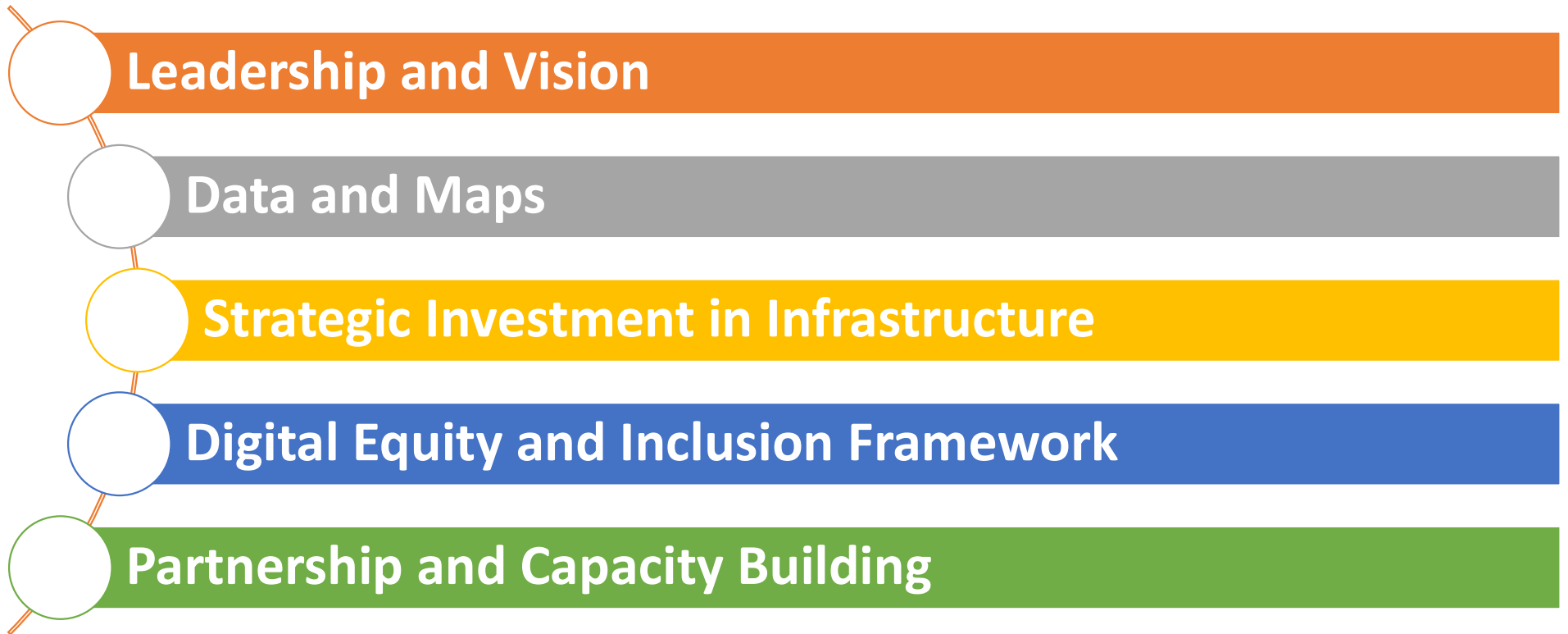
Vision

- All Wisconsinites have the information technology capacity needed to fully participate in society

Mission

- Make high performance broadband more accessible, ubiquitous, and affordable in Wisconsin

How will we reach our goals?



Broadband Office Programs

Broadband Expansion Grants



Leverage State, CARES, ARPA funding to spur internet build-out.



Broadband / Telecommuter Forward!

Get your community recognized for being ready to expand broadband access and telecommuting options.

COVID Response CARES Act Grants

Pandemic offers, Wi-Fi locations, Phone and Internet Helpline and distributed funding for 12 rapid response broadband projects.

Broadband Connectors Pilot

Partnership program with WEDC to provide technical assistance to communities.



Broadband Office Resources

Broadband Maps & Planning Tools

100 + internet providers and **billions** in internet expansion subsidies are on our maps.



Governor's Taskforce on Broadband Access

Develop, administer and provide technical assistance to the Taskforce.

Digital Equity and Inclusion

Placing an emphasis on affordability and the digital equity lens



Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Internet for All

INFRASTRUCTURE ACT* CREATES ~\$65B IN BROADBAND FUNDING

NTIA will administer ~\$48B of this new funding

FCC to administer ~\$14B

BEAD

**DIGITAL
EQUITY**

TRIBAL

**MIDDLE
MILE**

\$42.45B

\$2.75B

\$2.00B

\$1.00B

**Title I - Broadband
Equity, Access &
Deployment Program**

Formula-based grant program for U.S. states and territories. BEAD aims to close the access gap for unserved & underserved areas of the country.

Title III - Digital Equity Act

Three programs, established for planning & implementation of programs that promote digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity related to the adoption of broadband.

**Title II - Tribal
Connectivity Technical
Amendments**

Furthers current Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program by investing an additional \$2B to fund broadband adoption and infrastructure projects.

**Title IV - Enabling
Middle Mile Broadband
Infrastructure**

Provides funding to extend middle mile capacity to reduce cost of serving unserved and underserved areas and enhance network resilience.

\$14.2B

For Affordable Connectivity Program, which will replace the EBB program

USDA to administer \$2B

\$2.0B

Via the Rural Utilities Service

**Private Activity Bonds
\$600M**

\$600M

Authorizes State/local gov'ts to use private activity bonds for rural broadband

* Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Division F, Pub. L. 117-58 (Nov. 15, 2021)
Note: funding amounts inclusive of all administrative set-asides.





Office of the
Chief Information Officer

Broadband Community Engagement

AUTHOR/PRESENTER: Dr. Matt Behrens, CIO, State of Iowa

DATE: July 13, 2022



Who we are

The State of Iowa Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) is responsible for administering Governor Reynold's Empower Rural Iowa Broadband programs

- Grants
- Mapping
- Coordination

FG is a contractor to the OCIO that provides broadband consultation, local coordination, and support for the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program



History of Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Program

- **Funding**
 - 7 grant opportunities since 2018, providing funds for broadband expansion
 - Over \$350 million in state/federal funding awarded
 - Over \$680 million in new broadband buildout across Iowa when complete
 - All applications available at <https://ocio.iowa.gov/broadband>
- **Mapping**
 - Annually, OCIO releases a new broadband map of Iowa
 - State law and federal law diverge on mapping criteria
 - Maps become the basis for eligibility determinations used for funding decisions

Coming Soon

- **New federal funding**
 - Will be available in Iowa to support broadband and digital equity programs in the coming months. Amounts TBD.
 - National Telecommunications and Information Administration (“NTIA”) announced guidelines for its Infrastructure Investments and Jobs ACT (“IIJA”) programs on May 13.
- **New broadband maps for 2022**
 - OCIO and FCC are currently preparing new broadband maps.
 - OCIO and FCC will be hosting appeal processes. Encourage participation by the public to ensure maps are as accurate as possible.
 - OCIO’s map will become the basis for challenging unfavorable FCC mapping determinations. Inaccurate maps can result in fewer federal dollars allocated to Iowa.





Problem Statement

- Although the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program has made important progress, more work remains.
- Issues to address in the future include:
 - Communities have not had a voice in distribution of funds.
 - The most convenient and economically viable areas are often identified in applications.
 - There is a perception that some areas perpetually go without funding as a result.
 - New federal programs require increased community collaboration.

Envisioned Broadband Funding Process (2022 - 2023)

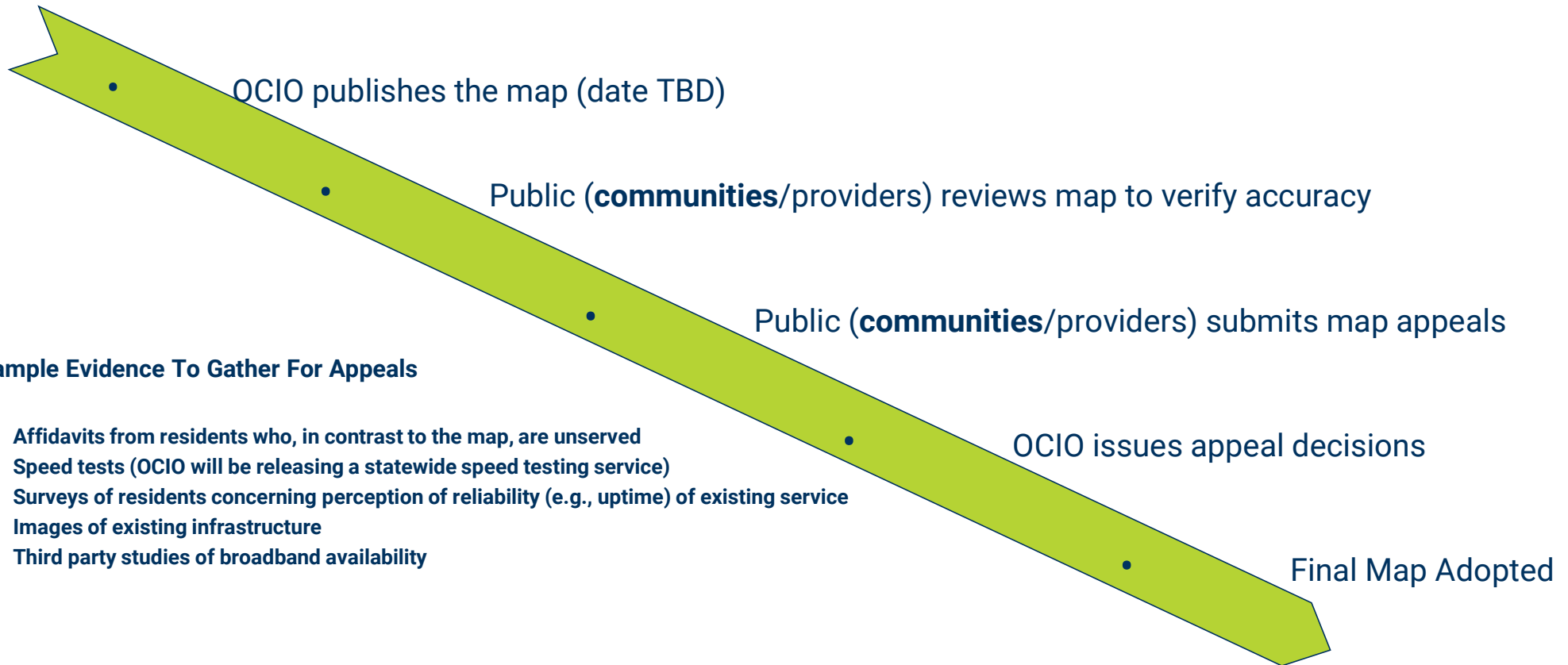
A four-part process is envisioned...with at least two opportunities for community collaboration



Purpose	1) Mapping	2) Map Appeals	3) Community Identification / Planning	4) Funding Opportunity
	Establishes a map of eligible locations (i.e., structures) across the state. Locations below 100/20 and 25/3 identified.	Allows the public to contest the declarations of service availability made by providers and established on the map	Allows communities to identify a geographic area with a critical need for broadband service. Other community planning activities are also required under NTIA rules	Provides grant funding to geographic areas established through the community identification process.
Who Participates?	Broadband Providers	Residents, broadband providers, communities	Community Representatives: City/county governments, school districts, consortia of political subdivisions, non-profit orgs representing communities, and regional entities	Broadband Providers.
What is Required	Broadband service availability data (e.g., network maps)	Contradictory evidence that disputes the broadband map (e.g., speed tests, survey data, affidavits from residents, address locations)	Identification of a geographic area on the OCIO broadband map. Additional supporting documentation.	Technical information describing the proposed buildout within the geographic area. Cost and budget data.



Map Appeal Process



Example Evidence To Gather For Appeals

- Affidavits from residents who, in contrast to the map, are unserved
- Speed tests (OCIO will be releasing a statewide speed testing service)
- Surveys of residents concerning perception of reliability (e.g., uptime) of existing service
- Images of existing infrastructure
- Third party studies of broadband availability



Community Identification Process

- OCIO issues an “Invitation to Qualify” or ITQ
- The ITQ is **not** a grant opportunity, but a way to identify areas for future funding
- Communities apply to the ITQ to identify that they have a need
- Data gathered as part of an application to the ITQ may include the following:

Geographic Area of Concern	Work, Education, Health Monitoring	Community Support	Community Broadband Capital	Barriers to Broadband
The geographic area identified by the community. Selection of a geographic area on the OCIO Broadband Map	Impediments to work, education, and health monitoring as a consequence of no broadband access	Evidence of community support for a project	In-kind or financial contributions offered by community to support a broadband project (non-binding)	Perceived barriers that have prevented broadband from reaching the community to date.
<i>Selection of a geographic area on OCIO's broadband map</i>	<i>Written narrative response (~2000 words or less)</i>	<i>Letters or testimonials gathered from the community</i>	<i>A list of items such as access to a water tower for citing of a wireless antenna or local funding contributions</i>	<i>Written narrative response (~2000 words or less)</i>

The ITQ applications are scored by OCIO on these and other factors to prioritize areas for future funding



Thank you!

- Community participation is critical. This approach can only work if communities are actively engaged.
- Prep work can occur now - capacity, data gathering, community discussions to determine if this approach is feasible
- Map publication slated for July timeframe (tentative). ITQ later this calendar year.
- Questions throughout the process?
 - Contact ociogrants@iowa.gov

IOWA[®]
economic development



GOVERNOR'S
EMPOWER RURAL IOWA
INITIATIVE

Center for Rural
Revitalization &
Empower Rural Iowa

Empower Rural Iowa Initiative

- Created by Executive Order - July 2018
- Partnership with the Iowa Rural Development Council
 - Co-chaired by Lt. Governor Adam Gregg and IRDC Past Chair Sandy Ehrig
- The Empower Rural Iowa Act created three task forces
 - develop recommendations





Empower Rural Iowa Initiative

- Investing in Rural Iowa
 - Addressing rural housing shortage and dilapidated buildings in community centers
 - Supporting rural entrepreneurs, developing an online business presence, and business succession planning
- Growing Rural Iowa
 - Addressing leadership and community development
 - Supporting recruitment and retention efforts
- Connecting Rural Iowa
 - Addressing the issue of financing broadband connectivity
 - Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program - OCIO



Connect Task Force Recommendations

- 2018
 - Optimize the existing broadband grant program to ensure state funding can stretch as far as possible.
 - Identify a consistent source of funding for the broadband grant program.
- 2019
 - Optimize the existing broadband grant program by providing additional funding and a higher state match for projects that provide higher levels of speed and service.
 - Continue to improve and update the maps of broadband connectivity in the state of Iowa.
- 2020
 - Support legislation or other efforts to provide for broadband project protection along the Iowa DOT right-of-way.

Leveraging Connectivity



- 2021
 - Broadband forward and telecommuter forward certifications
- 2022
 - Sharing stories
 - Best practices
 - Guidance & technical assistance

Recap & Questions

Thank you for attending today's session



September 14, 2022
Noon – 1 pm