



**Next
Century
Cities**

URBAN VS. RURAL

February 25, 2021

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Land O'Lakes is Working to Close the Digital Divide

A CONVERSATION WITH
LAND O'LAKES' MICHAEL DANIELS
AND NCC'S FRANCELLA OCHILLO

What do you want municipal leaders to know about the work that your coalition is doing, and how can they support it?

Land O' Lakes is a 99-year-old farmer-owned cooperative. We are made up of four different business units. The Dairy Unit is what most people know us from-- the butter and the cheese that you all see in the grocery store. There are 1,700 dairy farmers who are owners within the co-op. We also have Purina Animal Nutrition with small animal Purina, like dog and cat food, and then the large animal Purina. Then we also have a business called Wingfield United, which is a crop input business, so that includes seed, fertilizer, and other things that a farmer would put on their land. The Winfield and Purina products are sold through a vast network of agricultural retailers across the nation and also our member cooperatives.

Read more from the Land O'Lakes Interview [here](#).

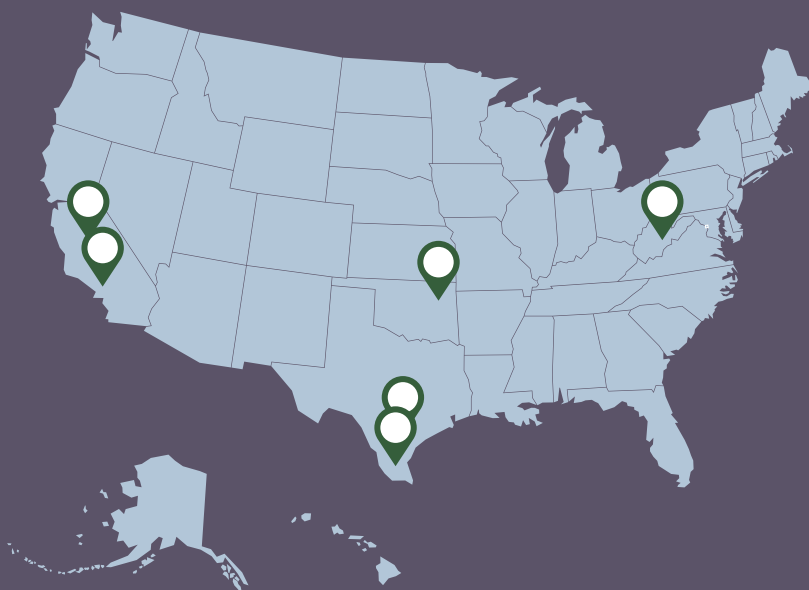


City Spotlights

Is There an Rural vs. Urban Digital Divide?

For this edition of our newsletter, the NCC team met virtually with communities from coast to coast to better understand how the digital divide impacts rural and urban areas. Our interviews illustrate how gaps in connectivity impact an entire community, regardless of population density or industry. They feature local leaders who shared ways in which rural communities continue to struggle with broadband adoption, just as urban communities also struggle with access.

Determination and togetherness are central themes. At the beginning of the pandemic, Tulsa put together a working group with different organizations. The Randolph County Housing Authority quickly discovered that “everyone from school kids to people of working age couldn't afford computers.” High cost and low quality internet are an ongoing problem in Delano, California, as community leaders are also working to address high poverty and unemployment. San Antonio highlighted the need for a holistic strategy with partnership and resources to improve access, adoption, and digital literacy for our community. A community leader in Central Valley explained why we need to start thinking about the Internet as a utility. He continued, “Until we get that sort of attention, and we start getting elected officials to use that language, they're going to see better speeds and access as a privilege for the wealthy and people in rural communities are going to continue to be left out.”



Local officials and community leaders are still working to respond to the increased connectivity demands related to COVID-19. The need is urgent and reaches every corner of the country. Funding strategies that pit rural versus urban communities or prioritize access over adoption only contribute to the problem. Read about on our cross country journey to:

- [Brownsville, Texas](#)
- [Randolph County, West Virginia](#)
- [Tulsa, Oklahoma](#)
- [Delano, California](#)
- [San Antonio, Texas](#)
- [Central Valley, California](#)

Brownsville, Texas

Population: 185,000

WITH RAMIRO GONZALEZ AND FELIPE ROMERO, CITY OF BROWNSVILLE

Could you start by telling us a little about Brownsville, Texas?

Brownsville is the 16th largest city in Texas. Our population is about 185,000 give or take. For our broadband landscape, we have some internet service providers that offer broadband and internet services here in town. I'd say maybe two years ago we were at the top of the “Least Connected Cities in the United States” list. So for us that wasn't good news obviously. And it's something that we decided to set out to change. We've been working on a broadband plan over the last year. What we set out to do was take our name off that list and put ourselves on another list, which is one of the most connected cities in the US.

So we're working together with a consultant who's done this sort of work before to come up with a broadband plan. That'll let us know where the fiber is needed, how we can create this network, and how to make it available to our residents and businesses here locally.

Read more from Brownsville's story [here](#).



Randolph County, WV

Population: 28,695

WITH JENNIFER GRIGGS, RANDOLPH COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY



Can you give us an overview of Randolph County and the work you all are doing.

We have about six different counties that we serve in West Virginia. Randolph County is the primary one. We serve Tucker County, Barbour County, Upshur County, and Lewis County as well. In this area, we found the COVID impact of not having access to broadband and digital devices. Last year, Rural LISC, the Local Initiatives Support Coalition, came to us and said “we have this program called the digital navigator program. We think it would be a good fit for you.”

It was something that our organization had never thought about taking on, but in discussing with rural LISC, we learned what this program is about. It’s about trying to help people learn computer basics and helping them find ways to procure computers and Internet subscriptions at low costs.

In this region, we have a lot of very low-income and low income families in the areas that we serve. Primarily Highland Community Builders, the other organization I am involved with, is really focused on very low income families. And so we really took this on and we were, I think, a little bit shocked at how much the service was needed. At least I was, and I live in a town called Elkins, the biggest town in Randolph County.

Read more from Randolph's story [here](#).



Tulsa, Oklahoma

Population: 402,324

WITH CLAY HOLK, CITY OF TULSA

Tell us about connectivity initiatives in Tulsa.

City of Tulsa: Our first big project is called Connect Tulsa, which recognized the importance of having broadband internet, particularly for students and workers. What we wanted to do was offer subsidized broadband internet, particularly for households with kids who attended public schools in Tulsa. We've been working with Cox Communications to do it and they've been a really good partner.



At the beginning of the pandemic, we put together a working group with lots of folks from different organizations to think about what was needed. That is where the subsidizing broadband idea came from. We started the program and people began signing up around October. Toward the beginning of the pandemic, we had an organization called Tulsa Responds that came in and created a call center.

The idea was: you put in your contact information, somebody got in touch with you and talked through your situation and what aid was out there to support you. We actually picked up that infrastructure and have been using it to put the word out about Connect Tulsa.

Read more from Tulsa's story [here](#).



Delano, California

Population: 52,886

WITH MAYOR BRYAN OSORIO



Could you start out by telling us a little bit about Delano?

Delano is located in Kern County, which is within the South San Joaquin Valley. For those who have never heard of it, I won't blame you because the population is a little over 53,000. It's known for being the center of the labor rights movement of the 1960s and going into the 1970s led by Caesar Chavez and Philip Vera Cruz.

I would say when we look at the US Census data, Delano has a high poverty rate of 20%. At the beginning of the year, they were given a report that had an unemployment rate of 22%. With the pandemic, we're assuming that that's gone higher. When you look at the Census, it tells you that around 40% of our community are immigrants.

That's what is special about the Central Valley and Delano. There is a large undocumented population as well. And this is where the demographics are intertwined with a high poverty rate, high unemployment rates, and an undocumented population.

Read more from Delano's story [here](#).



San Antonio, Texas

Population: 1.5 Million

WITH CANDELARIA MENDOZA, BRIAN DILLARD,
AND JOHN RODRIGUEZ, CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

Could you start by telling us a bit about the broadband landscape in San Antonio?

We are not unique in San Antonio. We are really similar to everybody else who is struggling with broadband issues, even in a big city. We have several internet service providers. Of course, we have those same conversations with them and get feedback from them saying that the majority of San Antonio has access. However, we know that whether the connection is there or not, we still have well over 20% of our community that doesn't have a home broadband connection.

So we are really figuring out why, and it's pretty much everything that other communities struggle with, whether it's not having the skills, affordability, or a combination thereof.



Getting details around the “why” is the reason the City of San Antonio partnered with the Digital Inclusion Alliance of San Antonio and the University of Texas at San Antonio to do a Digital Inclusion Survey and Assessment in 2019-2020.

Read more from San Antonio's story [here](#).



Central Valley, California

Population: 3.8 Million

WITH RANDY VILLEGAS, COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your community?

I'm currently a professor at the College of the Sequoias Community College here in the South Valley. I've also been previously involved in organizing efforts, sort of advocacy around a lot of different issues like immigration and healthcare. At the beginning of the pandemic, I co-authored an op-ed in Bakersfield, California, because we noticed there wasn't a prioritization for increasing broadband access to youth and students as we transitioned to online distance learning. I think there were a lot of assumptions around this transition to distance learning and access to broadband, not necessarily internet access, but access to spaces in general that people weren't taking into consideration.



I know former Representative TJ Cox proposed a broadband bill of rights when he was in Congress. I'm hoping we have more local officials paying attention to broadband circumstances that people deal with because especially in the Valley, I think there's such a lack of competition and a lack of government spending to solve the problem.

Read more about Central Valleys' story [here](#).



Diversity in Tech Policy

Impacts the Talent Pool Working to Close the Digital Divide

Like many industries, early career roles in tech policy is a dispositive factor in who advances into decision making roles. Candidates who are nurtured as interns and fellows are more likely to pursue positions of increasing seniority. That pipeline has a direct impact on who is working to expand broadband access and how policies are crafted to improve adoption while ensuring that policy frameworks reflect a socioeconomic and geographic diversity of thought.

In February 2021, Public Knowledge released a report, Diversity in Early-Career Tech Policy Roles: Challenges and Opportunities. Tsion Tesfaye, Communication Justice Fellow and Lead Writer, examines the importance of racial and ethnic diversity in early-career technology policy roles, offers ideas for increasing diversity, and outlines the impacts of technology policy on underrepresented populations, particularly people of color.

The report documents practices that organizations can implement to attract and retain diverse advocates, allowing “people who are most affected by a problem to be part of the solution.” A survey of technology policy organizations also revealed that:

- Job opportunities are circulated primarily within the tech policy groups and their networks, therefore making access to these networks crucial for entering the field.
- Job description content can influence the applicant pool, decreasing or increasing the pool of diverse applicants.
- There is a lack of data on early-career hiring in technology policy nonprofits; encouraging data collection could increase diversity.

Fostering diversity improves problem-solving capabilities and increases the talent pool in organizations working to address the digital divide. Review Tesfaye’s recommendations [here](#). Public Knowledge also hosted a webinar, [A Seat at the Table: How Tech Policy Groups Can Welcome Diverse Talent](#), that expanded on key findings in the report.





Broadband News

States couldn't afford to wait for the FCC's broadband maps to improve. So they didn't. States are taking broadband mapping into their own hands. With billions of dollars in federal funding at stake, Georgia, Maine, Pennsylvania and others are building their own granular data to pinpoint gaps in internet coverage.

Governors across the country are sharing their vision for broadband expansion in 2021. As governors deliver their State of the State addresses, at least 33 have acknowledged that broadband access must be a priority for all people. Many of these governors are putting their words into action by unlocking new opportunities for funding and partnerships across their states.

House Republicans propose nationwide ban on municipal broadband networks. Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) and Bob Latta (R-Ohio) recently announced the [CONNECT Act](#) (“Communities Overregulating Networks Need Economic Competition Today”). The Act would implement a blanket ban on any further expansion of deployment of publicly supported broadband networks while creating an exception for existing municipal networks and the Tennessee Valley Authority. Read NCC's analysis on the legislative proposal [here](#).

Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel Establishes Broadband Data Task Force. On February 17th, Acting FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel announced a cross-agency broadband data task force that will coordinate efforts within the FCC to collect and update the FCC Form 477 data. NCC has previously [commented](#) on the need for a more accurate and granular data collection process. The Acting Chairwoman also underscored the need for local, state, and tribal governments and consumers to have reliable access to this data.

NCC is Working to Connect Members

NCC FILES REPLY COMMENTS ON THE EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT

On February 16, 2021, NCC submitted reply comments in response to the FCC's request for public input on administering the Emergency Broadband Benefit, a program that will help low-income households maintain broadband Internet services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The comments elevate the importance of collaboration with local officials and community-level partners while implementing the program.

THE ROUNDTABLE ON THE EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR NCC TO ELEVATE COMMENTS FROM MUNICIPAL LEADERS.

The FCC hosted a roundtable on the Emergency Broadband Benefit, a \$3.2 billion program that will provide a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households. Residents on Tribal lands will be eligible for up to \$75 per month. NCC's Executive Director, Francella Ochillo, participated in the roundtable and elevated local insights in a discussion with multiple industry, government, and advocacy groups.

IN A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH FOUR FCC COMMISSIONERS, NCC REITERATED THE COMMUNITY LEVEL IMPACT OF THE EBB.

Next Century Cities met with the offices of Acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel and Commissioners Brendan Carr, Geoffrey Starks, and Nathan Simington of the FCC to discuss implementation rules for the EBBP. We urged the agency to develop a program that has rules that are clear and responsive to current connectivity needs while reducing enrollment barriers for consumers and providers.

NCC SUPPORTS DIGITAL EQUITY EFFORTS IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND.

Next Century Cities staff met with local and state officials as well as digital equity advocates from the City of Baltimore, State of Maryland, and community organizations. NCC shared opportunities to build on broadband access and adoption initiatives for residents. View the materials prepared for local and state officials [here](#).





NCC SUPPORTS A LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL FOR PUBLIC ENTITIES IN WASHINGTON TO PROVIDE BROADBAND SERVICE

On February 2nd, Next Century Cities joined a coalition of allied organizations in a letter supporting Washington's HB 1336, a bill that would clear the legal pathway for all public entities in the state to provide broadband service and help close the digital divide.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BCA ALLIES, NCC URGES FCC TO UPDATE INACCURACIES IN THE 2021 BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT REPORT

NCC joined fellow members of the Broadband Connects America Coalition in a letter to the FCC expressing serious concern with inaccurate conclusions contained in the 2021 Broadband Deployment Report.

NCC SUBMITS COMMENTS WITH THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

On February 1, 2021, NCC submitted comments in response to the California Public Utilities Commission's request for input on a pilot proposal to include fiber in facilities restoration following natural disasters and a query into how the roughly one million dollars in its Digital Divide Account should be used. NCC's response highlights the importance of including local insights and expertise in state broadband planning.

NCC PARTICIPATES IN INAUGURAL MEETING WITH ACTING CHAIR ROSENWORCEL

President Joseph Biden appointed Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel as Acting Chairwoman of the Federal Communications Commission ("Commission") on January 21st. One week later, Chairwoman Rosenworcel participated in a meeting with public interest groups—the first in her new role—in which advocates offered input on what the agency should tackle as immediate priorities. Ryan Johnston, NCC's Policy Council for Federal Policy joined the meeting to highlight the importance of local connections.

NCC & ALLIES PRESSURE THE PRESIDENT TO NOMINATE A 5TH FCC COMMISSIONER

In a January 28th letter, Next Century Cities along with public interests allies asked the White House to expediently nominate, and the Senate to quickly confirm, a new Commissioner to the FCC.

FOCUSED ON LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, PROMOTING ENROLLMENT, AND COMPETITION, NCC FILES COMMENTS ON THE EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT.

NCC submitted comments on how the FCC should implement the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. NCC's comments focus on developing an inclusive and competitive list of participating providers, incorporating pricing disclosure requirements to help the Commission assess affordability, and partnering with local and state officials who are critical partners for promoting the program.

BROADBAND 101 WEBINAR

On January 21st, Next Century Cities' Policy Counsel for Local & State Initiatives, Corian Zacher, and Policy Associate, Lukas Pietrzak, led members and community advocates in a discussion about the basics of launching and resourcing broadband initiatives. This "Broadband 101" webinar covered a range of topics from identifying funding opportunities and improving broadband mapping data to COVID-19 response measures and the new Biden-Harris Administration priorities.

NCC FILES LETTER REGARDING COVID-19 IN OHIO

Next Century Cities submitted a response to Cuyahoga County's request for information (RFI) on January 15, 2021. Since social distancing precautions related to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic began, counties, towns, and cities across the country are increasingly aware of the importance of improving broadband access for all residents.

NCC URGES LOCAL LEADERS TO COMMENT ON THE FCC'S EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT PROCEEDING

NCC and other public interest allies met with Commissioner Geoffrey Starks on January 8th, to discuss proposals for the EBB. Francella Ochillo, NCC's Executive Director, expressed the need for providers of all sizes - including municipal networks and electric coops - to be included in the program. She also explained why targeted media outreach and partnerships with community-based organizations will be critical for informing low-income households that have limited access to announcements online.



The Emergency Broadband Benefit

The FCC is getting ready to launch a new \$3.2 billion Emergency Broadband Benefit program to assist consumers with broadband internet costs during the COVID-19 emergency. The program, born of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, aims to provide consumers with up to \$50 a month discount on broadband internet services and associated equipment. The benefit increases to \$75 per month for participants who reside on Federally-recognized Tribal lands. Eligible households may also receive a discount on one supported device (laptop, desktop computer, or tablet) with a copay of \$10-\$50 towards the purchase price.

If implemented effectively, the EBB program will allow local leaders to help low-income residents overcome one of the largest barriers to broadband adoption—affordability. Local officials and community leaders can help ensure that everyone who qualifies for the program knows that it is available. The FCC is working through ways to attract robust participation among service providers to ensure that every eligible resident has service options. Communities that provide broadband service, either directly or through public-private partnerships, should apply to be a participating provider. Eligibility rules will be released in March 2021.

The FCC is mobilizing people and organizations to help ensure that the low-income households in your community find out about the Emergency Broadband Benefit. Local government officials and community leaders can [sign-up to be an outreach partner here.](#)



Examining the House CONNECT Act

BY RYAN JOHNSTON, POLICY COUNSEL, FEDERAL PROGRAMS



The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that broadband access is essential for distance learning, telework, and telehealth applications. To that end, on February 16, 2021, House republicans announced a series of 28 bills that are intended to “improve” broadband competition and connectivity across the nation. One bill is of particular concern.

The “Communities Overregulating Networks Need Economic Competition Today” Act (“CONNECT” Act) claims to promote competition by limiting government run broadband networks. Specifically, it states, “a State or political subdivision thereof may not provide or offer for sale to the public, a telecommunications provider, or to a commercial provider of broadband internet access service, retail or wholesale broadband internet access service.”

The proposal provides an exception that would allow existing state and municipal networks to continue to provide service in areas where there is not more than one commercial provider.

Unfortunately, even if a municipal provider is allowed to continue providing service they would be barred from expanding service networks outside of the geographic areas in which the State or municipality lawfully operates.

Notably, the proposed bill expressly exempts the Tennessee Valley Authority from these restrictions. Of particular concern, it would also prevent the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) from preempting State laws that prohibit the creation and operation of state or municipal networks.

The FCC estimates that at least 14.5 million Americans don’t have access to broadband Internet. Municipal broadband networks provide critical connectivity resources for those in urban and rural areas that may not have other options for service.

Unfortunately, if enacted, this bill would stop states and municipalities from continuing to expand their service networks. It would also curb competition with traditional providers, limiting price and service quality in countless communities.

Local leaders welcome opportunities to work with elected officials on proposals that will, in effect, promote public and private investment. This attempt misses the mark as erect barriers for new community-based networks, while reducing public investment in broadband.



6 ASKS FOR THE 46TH PRESIDENT

Next Century Cities is collecting feedback from local officials in “[6 Asks for the 46th President](#).” The list will include recommended priorities for the Biden-Harris Administration, the 117th Congress, and the Federal Communications Commission. Based on member feedback in 2020, we shared three goals that would help to ensure that every community has fast, affordable, and reliable. However, the new Administration needs to hear from you - your community's story in your own words.

Submit feedback for the Executive Branch, Congress, or the FCC [here](#). Quotes will be elevated in a letter to the President and Congress and documented in FCC filings noting only the municipality and state. Names and emails will not be shared. City council members, utility managers, technology directors, economic development officers, chief information officers, and others have already weighed-in. Here are a few excerpts from their February 2021 submissions:

- "We desperately need federal matching funds deployed directly to local communities to help fund this buildout without funneling those monies via those state governments who refuse to allow municipalities to take control of their own high speed internet destiny."
- "As we evolve technologically to where voice and video are just applications on an IP-based broadband network, there has never been a better time to achieve structural separation between infrastructure and content providers."
- "The Biden Administration should prioritize ensuring there is fiber reaching to every city and town. Then support the town/city in finding the fastest and most affordable way to get reliable communication infrastructure using different technologies and strategies."
- "The FCC data collection system (maps and Form 477 entries) is inaccurate and insufficient. Legislation has been passed to improve the mapping which will ultimately improve access. The FCC has never collected pricing info from providers, though. Having this data will go a long way to helping affordability as well making the ISPs accountable."



How To: Submit FCC Comments

The Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") makes rules that shape broadband policy and provides direction on what resources are assigned to support broadband deployment. In fact, the agency is responsible for allocating billions of dollars to deploy broadband to unserved and underserved communities.

The agency can start a [proceeding](#) to create or change rules and policies when it identifies a need. It can also do so when an outside party files a petition seeking new regulations or change in existing rules.

NCC [encourages local officials to provide input](#) on how to improve broadband policy. If your community is thinking about ways to participate in the FCC's public comment filling process, review the [FCC's instructions here](#). For information about the comment submission process or requesting meetings with staff, local officials can contact **Ryan Johnston, Policy Counsel, Federal Programs** at ryan@nextcenturycities.org.



Policy Note

THE URBAN AND RURAL DIVIDE IS NOT AS CLEAR AS YOU MAY THINK

BY RYAN JOHNSTON

Broadband policy discussions are often reduced into how broadband should be deployed in rural areas, and why adoption is an ongoing issue among urban populations. The technologies and strategies needed for success are fundamentally different. What they share in common is that both urban and rural solutions require funding to improve.

Many federal and state funding programs separate funding opportunities into urban and rural. This approach often prioritizes a perceived lack of infrastructure in rural areas, and prioritizes digital adoption programs in urban ones.

Prioritizing infrastructure in rural areas and digital adoption in urban centers will only address parts of a much more complex digital dilemma.

Funding should not be arbitrarily locked behind rural and urban designations. Instead, it should be made available to those communities that need it the most for community leaders to identify the best connectivity strategies.

The most recent Broadband Deployment Report released by the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission”) notes that 74% of people have access to at least two options for fixed broadband at speeds of 25/3. Notably, the Commission did not assess whether these options for service are affordable even though broadband affordability is critical. Assuming that a household has access to a connection, if the broadband plans associated with that connection are not affordable, it could be equivalent to having no connection at all.

Read more from Ryan’s policy note [here](#).



Policy Note

THREE STRATEGIES FOR EXPANDING BROADBAND ACCESS IN UNINCORPORATED AREAS

BY CORIAN ZACHER

People in unincorporated communities need broadband access just as much as people living in cities do, but are disadvantaged from the organizational structures and funding opportunities that incorporated areas have to connect residents.

Each state has its own rules governing incorporated places' establishment and operation. Incorporated places, which in most states include cities, towns, villages, and boroughs, may be recognized by name and operate their own governance structure. Some are not.

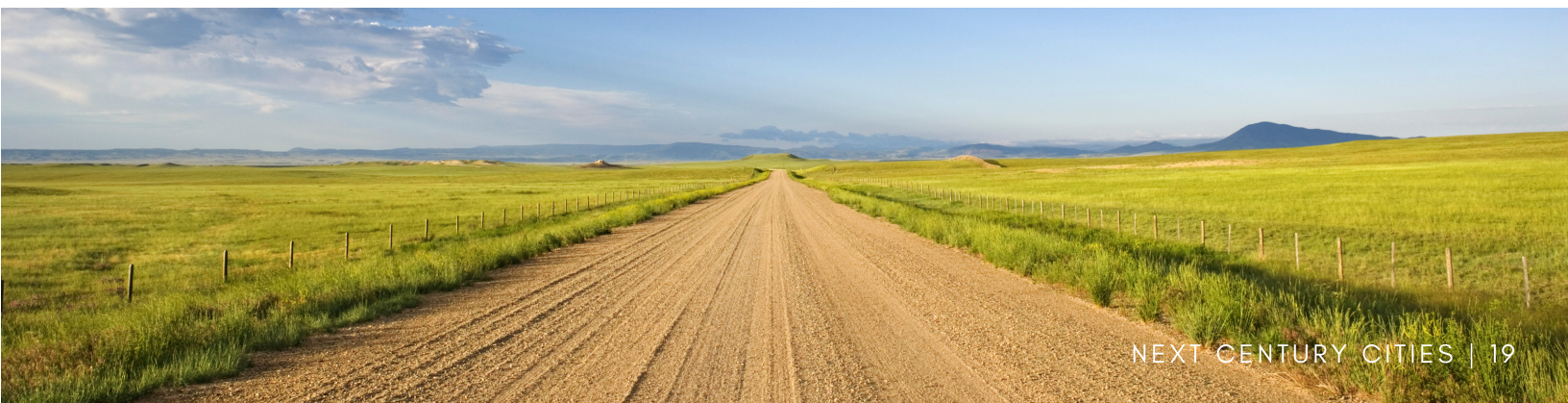
In 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau published a report showing that unincorporated places comprise most of the landmass in the U.S. and house around 36.3 percent of the population. Many have the same characteristics as cities with residents, businesses, and governance structures all their own.

It is well known that rural areas with low population density are among the most expensive and difficult to reach with wired broadband service. Oftentimes, unincorporated areas have these same features.

Population density in cities is 46 times higher than in unincorporated areas. Rural areas persistently lack any wireline infrastructure at all.

Even if the network is built, it may cost a resident several thousand dollars simply for a provider to decide whether it is feasible to bring them online. While satellite is widely available in rural areas, it is often expensive, unreliable, and lower quality compared to wired cable and fiber connections.

Read more from Corian's Policy Note [here](#).



In Case You Missed It

ABELL FOUNDATION'S: THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN MARYLAND

The Abell Foundation funded a digital divide report commissioned by The Community Development Network of Maryland, which was released in January. The report found that 520,000 Maryland households, including 108,000 households with children below the age of 18, did not subscribe to wireline service. Further, the report also concluded that two-thirds of disconnected residents live in Baltimore or other metropolitan counties.

AARP'S DISRUPT DISPARITIES: CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS FOR 50+ ILLINOISIANS OF COLOR

AARP Illinois, in collaboration with Advancing Justice, Chicago Urban League, and the Resurrection Project, published a report on how racial disparities keep people from living longer, healthier, and more productive lives. Among its conclusions:

- While access to the internet is beneficial for older adults, in Illinois, African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino older adults experience lower rates of broadband access at home than their white counterparts.
- The biggest barrier to broadband access is cost, with a “low-cost” service defined as \$60 a month or less. Next is technology skills, where 48 percent of older adults report needing outside help to set up or use internet devices.
- Connectivity is both a rural and urban issue. Fifty-six percent of rural Illinoisans do not have broadband access.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NATIONAL BROADBAND AGENDA

In January 2021, the Benton Institute for Broadband and Society released their recommendations to support a national broadband agenda. The agenda was developed with the support of the broadband advocacy community and contributions from organizations across the country. The report outlines a number of goals Congress, the Biden-Harris Administration, and states should pursue.





Member Opportunities

Honolulu, HI

Oldham County, Kentucky is hiring a Broadband Manager.

Oldham County Fiscal Court is accepting applications for a Broadband Development Coordinator. This position within the Engineering Department will work closely with outside contractors to implement the extension of broadband to under-served areas of the county. The position requires an energetic, self-starter with strong analytical and communications skills. Find more information [here](#).

Merit is looking for stars for its Digital Inclusion Youtube Series.

Merit is developing an informational YouTube video series we have lovingly deemed "The Moonshot Minutes." Their goal is to provide practical, easy to follow, basic internet setup and usage guidance to end-users. We want you to help us achieve this goal. If you are interested in recording and submitting a 3-5 minute video, please contact ryfuller@merit.edu.

Contribute to NCC's "6 Asks for the 46th."

Next Century Cities is collecting insight from local leaders on what you need most from the Biden-Harris Administration. Outlined above, our team has proposed three "asks" of the new President and his Administration. We hope that you will join us in developing more. You can view our first three proposals [here](#) and contribute your own comments or ideas [here](#). If you have any questions, please contact Lukas at Lukas@nextcenturycities.org.

The National Skills Coalition is hiring.

A workforce development organization that focuses on state and federal policy advocacy is searching for Communications Associate; Office Manager; and Director, State Strategies West. Click [here](#) to learn about the vacancies.

Do you know of a Good Digital Inclusion Consultant?

A Catholic High School in Ohio that is looking for a consultant to help with a strategic plan for its digital ecosystem - i.e. platform, educator/parent/student usage, digital literacy, etc. Contact [Carolyn Rumbarger](#) for more information.