

next century cities



2021

"If You Want to Go Far, Go Together."

REFLECTING ON 2021



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Kimball Sekaquptewa,
Chief Technology Officer
at the Santa Fe Indian
School



LOCAL STORIES

Elevating connectivity
initiatives and ongoing
needs in communities
natiwide



NCC RESEARCH

NCC published an
incredible amount of
original research on a
wide variety of topics.



DIGITAL EQUITY PLANS

Showcasing digital
equity plans released in
NCC member
municipalities



STATE WORK

Highlights from NCC's
work alongside local
and state leaders in
California, Ohio, Idaho,
Colorado, and more



BROADBAND & EDUCATION

The sudden shift from
in-person to distance
learning thrust the
homework gap into
the spotlight.



CONVENING FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Conferences, panels, and
roundtable discussions are
key tools for reaching new
audiences and welcoming
new allies.



MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS

Each month, NCC
publishes a newsletter that
includes updates from
member municipalities and
other broadband
developments.



WHAT DOES BROADBAND ENABLE?

The NCC team takes
time to proactively
consider how ubiquitous
broadband access and
adoption could transform
communities.

reflections from the executive director

2021 marked another extraordinary year for Next Century Cities. Even though the COVID pandemic continued to present unique challenges, we stayed focused on helping local and state leaders achieve their broadband goals. We welcomed new member municipalities, worked hand-in-hand with local officials, expanded our network of state partners, and highlighted the many ways in which local insights could improve federal broadband policies.

As evidenced in our advocacy, research, and public filings, NCC's staff grew in number and expertise. Of note, Ryan Johnston showcased his aptitude for federal proceedings, especially those related to low-income broadband programs, broadband deployment, and spectrum policy. Corian Zacher amassed encyclopedic knowledge of local and state broadband developments and never missed an opportunity to document local voices in public records. Lukas Pietrzak, part of the heartbeat of our team, managed member relationships, helped nurture new partnerships, and ensured that NCC's website became a go-to resource for local governments. Finally, Brittany-Rae Gregory was not only masterful at developing communications strategies and advocacy campaigns, but she also used graphic storytelling to bring our work to life.

Many others, including contractors and volunteers, were integral to our success. In particular, our advisory board members - Rondella Hawkins, Aldona Valicenti, and Joshua Edmonds - were always generous with their time and pushed us to set new standards of excellence. Philanthropic support enables NCC to advocate for local officials without any membership fees. We cannot thank you enough for endorsing our work.

In lockstep with organizational allies, NCC was able to deliver on our promise to make broadband a national priority. Our next steps are aimed at ensuring that the communities in the greatest need get access to an unprecedented amount of federal and state broadband resources including program funding and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

Clearly, we are in the midst of a digital revolution. NCC is ready to lead and will continue to embrace changes in the broadband landscape. We work tirelessly to welcome new voices into discussions about bridging the digital divide, recognizing that challenges to conventional thinking make our collective efforts more effective and inclusive. We are serious about bringing broadband opportunities within reach for every community nationwide and continually reiterate the need to be more proactive in developing technology and telecommunications policies.

We could not do all of the extraordinary things that we do without the broadband advocates, intersectional allies, and organizational partnerships that have helped us make an impact this year. As we gear up for 2022, we will need you even more - your ideas, your fight, and your support. You have always been among the best parts of NCC's story.

Grateful and determined,

Francella



signing off on 2021



**BRITTANY-RAE
GREGORY**
[she/her]

Role on the NCC Team: Communications Director

Favorite 2021 NCC Memory: Our inaugural academic pre-conference was my favorite memory. It was great to be able to provide a space for academicians to share their work in realtime.

What I'm Looking Forward to in 2022: Finding new ways to foster authentic communication with members and advocates.



**RYAN
JOHNSTON**
[he/him]

Role on the NCC Team: Policy Counsel, Federal Programs

Favorite 2021 NCC Memory: Speaking on the keynote panel at Mountain Connect was my first opportunity to speak on a keynote panel, which was also my first in-person conference during COVID. It was an honor to represent community interests, and I look forward to doing so again.

What I'm Looking Forward to in 2022: Engaging our members on novel issues that they may not have been involved with before.

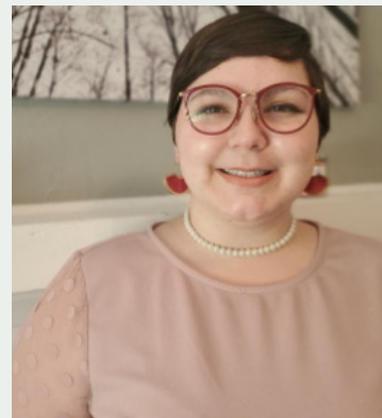


**LUKAS
PIETRZAK**
[he/him]

Role on the NCC Team: Program Manager, Partnerships & Campaigns

Favorite 2021 NCC Memory: My favorite memories were our webinars where we heard from local communities about their initiatives and dreams. Even during COVID, communities have been working harder than ever to get their residents connected.

What I'm Looking Forward to in 2022: I am looking forward to getting back into our member communities! We are so eager to connect with leaders in person.



**CORIAN
ZACHER**
[they/them]

Role on the NCC Team: Policy Counsel, State and Local Initiatives

Favorite 2021 NCC Memory: I enjoyed learning about the momentum that local officials are building in their communities around digital equity and inclusion through newsletter interviews and events.

What I'm Looking Forward to in 2022: Continuing to support and uplift community initiatives and supporting collaborative efforts between state and local governments as incoming funding shepherds new opportunities.



making a difference

WITH KIMBALL SEKAQUAPTEWA



The belief that broadband is for everyone is one of the core tenets that fuels Next Century Cities' work. It became widely apparent as communities were forced to move online. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have highlighted local leaders that are stepping up to the challenges of getting residents online.

As we close out 2021, we would like to put a spotlight on Kimball Sekaquaptewa, Chief Technology Officer at the Santa Fe Indian School, an off-reservation boarding school that serves 700 students from the 19 Pueblos, the Apache, and Navajo tribes of New Mexico.

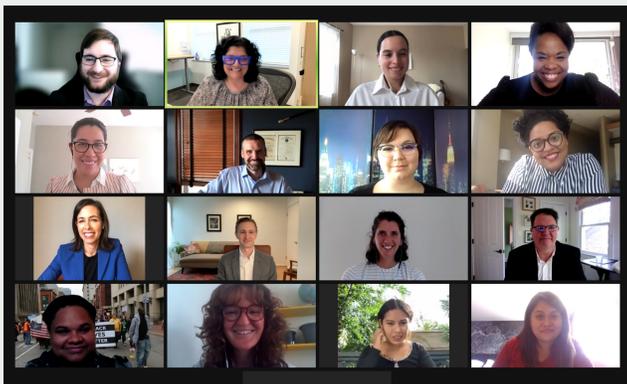
Kimball Sekaquaptewa is from the Hopi Tribe and lives in Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico. She is the proud mother of three and has been married for almost 20 years. Among her most notable accomplishments is her work to connect families schoolwide with

digital opportunities. Sekaquaptewa's work at the Santa Fe Indian School also showcases the far-reaching impact of community advocacy and importance bringing broadband within reach for every household. priorities of our communities.

Next Century Cities: Could you give us a little bit of background on the communities that you serve and what the broadband landscape looks like in those communities?

Kimball Sekaquaptewa: My name is Kimball Sekaquaptewa. I'm the CTO of the Santa Fe Indian School, which was originally established in 1890 in Santa Fe as a federal boarding school. It has been under Tribal control since the mid-seventies after the passage of the Public Law, 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

Continue reading about Kimball's work and the Santa Fe Indian School on the [NCC blog](#).



Above: In September 2021, local leaders from Baltimore met with Acting FCC Chair Jessica Rosenworcel to discuss the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

shining a national spotlight on local stories



In 2021 we built upon the broadband advocacy foundation that 2020 laid. The Next Century Cities team was determined to strategically interrelate with members, allies, lawmakers, and policymakers to advance the needs of local communities.

As we moved into year two of the global pandemic, it became even clearer that there was no one-size-fits-all solution for connecting communities, and apparent that local voices should inform the solutions. We opened the year speaking to Pew about the significant role that local leaders should play in closing the digital divide.

The year began with a new presidential administration and new municipal leadership in many cities, towns, villages, and counties nationwide. We felt that this was a good time to gauge municipal needs, and followed through by elevating local perspectives in a letter to President Biden and Vice President Harris.

In May, Francella Ochillo joined a distinguished group of witnesses in a virtual hearing entitled "Broadband Equity: Addressing Disparities in Access and Affordability" in front of the Communications and Technology Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

In her testimony, Francella highlighted cities, counties, towns, and villages across the nation that treat broadband as essential infrastructure.

Throughout the year we prioritized meetings between NCC members and FCC leadership. In February, Ryan Johnston met with Commissioner Brendan Carr's team to discuss provider eligibility for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.

In 2021, we built upon broadband momentum that we started in 2020.

In September, NCC facilitated a meeting between Baltimore-area community leaders and then Acting Chair Jessica Rosenworcel's Office. During the meeting local leaders shared challenges, triumphs and suggestions associated with the Emergency Broadband Benefit. On November 4, 2021 local leaders met with Commissioner Geoffrey Starks to discuss successes with the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program and suggestions for changes that would help streamline the program.

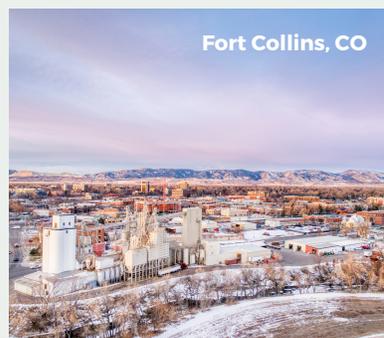
In addition to bringing local stories in front of federal leadership, Next Century Cities also held our first virtual



East Liverpool, OH



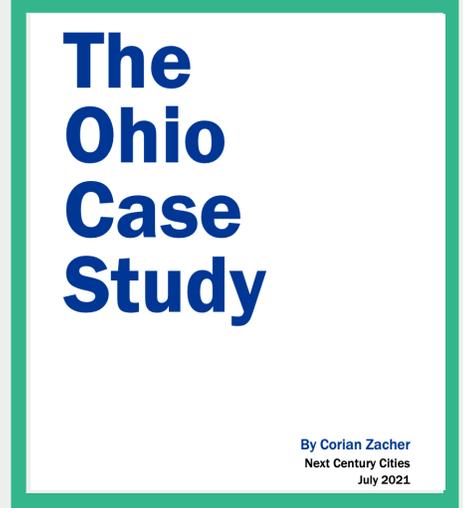
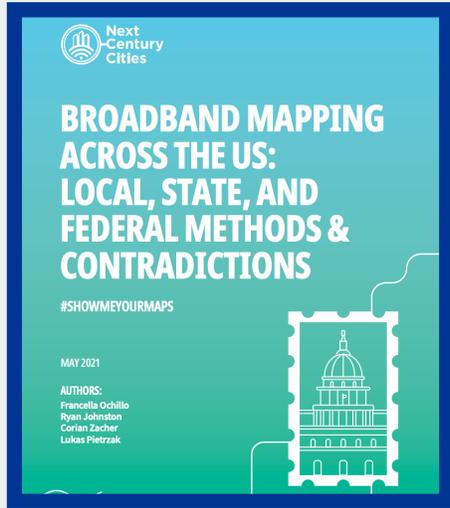
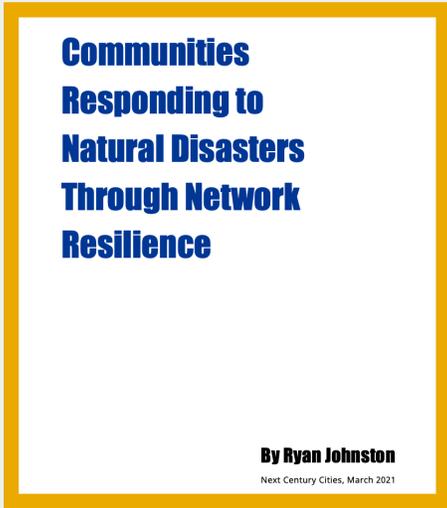
Baltimore, MD



Fort Collins, CO

conference complete with an academic preconference to advance ideas and shift the narrative around broadband access. During the July conference, advocates from across sectors shared research and on-the-ground experiences, highlighting the influence of the global pandemic on their work.





ncc's research

NCC continues to generate original research on a wide variety of topics.



This year saw NCC engage in an incredible amount of original research on a wide variety of topics. NCC continued its work cataloguing broadband data improvements, and advocating for states to reduce barriers that hinder local broadband solutions. NCC also engaged in new efforts framing broadband affordability and digital inclusion as priorities in every community. Finally, NCC undertook significant research on the importance of network resilience and future-proofing new and existing network builds. As we look forward to another successful upcoming year, we are always looking for new and exciting areas to explore.

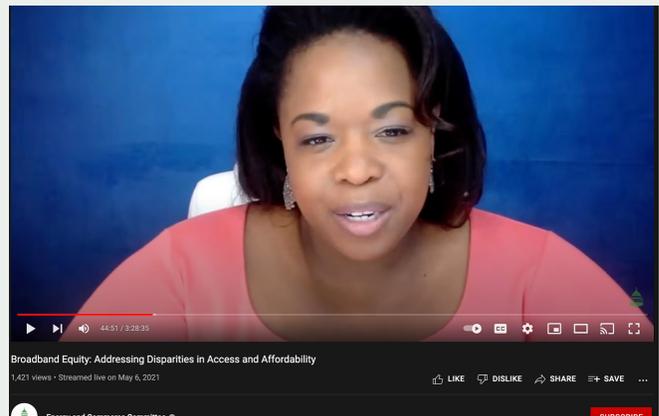
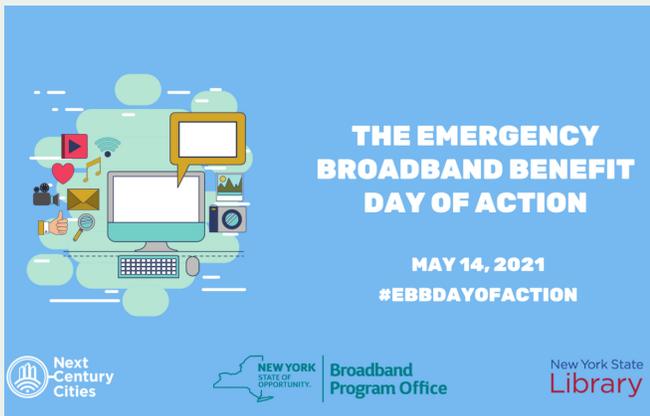
Improving Broadband Data

With every new funding program, Congress looks to the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") for leadership identifying where broadband is and is not. However, the FCC's data too often misreports broadband availability. In May NCC released a report entitled "[Broadband Mapping Across the US: Local, State, and Federal Methods & Contradictions](#)." This report highlights how states and localities have undertaken their own broadband mapping campaigns and the stark differences between local findings and FCC data.

Next Century Cities has continued following ongoing [mapping and data collection efforts](#) since the report's release. NCC provided opportunities for states and localities to share what they have learned, highlighting the challenges that faulty broadband data creates with [congressional leaders](#). Finally, [NCC participated in a panel](#) with institutional allies discussing the state of the art for broadband data collection tools and resources.

Removing State and Federal Barriers on Community-Based Solutions

This year NCC took on several proposals from states that would further hinder municipalities in undertaking their own projects that could help close the digital divide. In August, NCC released a [case study on Ohio](#). The study showcases local broadband programs and digital equity initiatives undertaken across the state highlighting the important impact that state policy has on community efforts. NCC also worked with 12 municipalities and community-based organizations, in July, to submit a letter to Ohio Governor Mike DiWine and the Ohio House and Senate Finance Committees. This letter addressed the impacts that proposed legislative amendments could have on local broadband projects. In Idaho, NCC signed on to a letter supporting [Senate Bill 1149](#).



This bill encouraged the State legislature to clear the way for municipal broadband solutions. At the federal level, NCC worked to [explain why](#) a series of Congressional proposals would erect new barriers for municipalities seeking to explore local broadband network options. Reducing barriers that stand in the way of communities pursuing connectivity solutions that will suit their residents' needs is critical to ubiquitous connectivity.

Making Broadband Affordable

The FCC implemented the Emergency Broadband Benefit ("EBB") in early 2021 with the goal of helping those who could not afford their broadband bill. Outreach and community engagement remains essential to ensuring affordability programs reach as many households as possible. To this end, NCC created a resource page explaining the program and what consumers and providers can do to get signed up. NCC also organized and led a [day of action](#) for local and state officials to help promote the program.

NCC partnered with the New York State Library and Broadband Office to host a webinar to share effective outreach and enrollment strategies. Additionally, NCC has been working to ensure that other affordability programs remain impactful. Next Century Cities [submitted FCC comments](#) emphasizing the importance of the Lifeline voice services, and [reply comments](#) urging the FCC to preserve the voice only discount. In the same vein, NCC [joined public interest allies](#) in asking the FCC to protect the Lifeline subsidy for TracFone subscribers. NCC also filed comments with the FCC urging the Commission to protect logical government remedies when assessing and attempting to recover the costs of pole replacements.

In partnership with public interest allies, NCC filed an [amicus brief](#) supporting New York State's mandatory \$15 offering for all ISPs. The brief gives the court valuable insights as to why existing low-income programs alone are insufficient and the impactful role of New York's law.

Supporting Digital Inclusion

Several NCC members serve as digital inclusion role models. At NCC's annual conference, on a panel hosted by Lukas Pietrzak, [Chula Vista, California, Mayor Mary Casillas Salas](#) discussed the city's approach to digital inclusion. In addition, on the panel "[Building Sustainable Solutions for Digital Inclusion in Equity Post the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)," Khotan Harmon, Digital Inclusion Fellow for the City of Austin, Texas, highlighted the benefits of designing and implementing digital inclusion programs in other municipalities. In July, NCC [joined a panel](#) exploring the impacts and potential policy solutions that could improve outcomes for the Black communities. NCC has also supported digital inclusion efforts by highlighting the importance of digital inclusion in improving broadband access and adoption for [people with disabilities](#), members of the [LGBTQ+ community](#), and people living on low incomes.



Resilience and Future Proofing New and Existing Networks

Lastly, NCC took a hard look at what it means when networks fail. Millions of people rely on Internet infrastructure to stay connected to friends, family, and emergency services during natural disasters. However, when those lifelines are cut, disconnection can have catastrophic effects. This year, NCC [released a white paper](#) spotlighting the resilience actions which communities across the nation have undertaken. The paper also suggested recommendations that the FCC adopt in order to improve national resilience planning. NCC also took an in-depth look at how the [U.S. Virgin Islands](#) have implemented network resilience measures in the wake of Hurricanes Maria and Irma. In April, NCC partnered with [Libraries Without Borders](#) to discuss many of the connectivity challenges facing Puerto Rico. Associate Member of the Puerto Rico Public Service Regulatory Board, Alexandra Fernandez Navarro, highlighted local efforts to address reliable service, affordability, digital literacy, and access to devices. At the State level, [NCC submitted comments](#) in response to the California Public Utilities Commission's request for input on resilience and new funding measures. NCC underscored the pivotal role that states like California could play in setting a model for nationwide resilience policy.

local digital equity plans

Next Century Cities communities understand that no person should be prevented from getting online simply as a result of their identity, location, or socioeconomic status.

For decades, the digital divide had held a deep and far-reaching impact on communities across the United States, but it has affected historically marginalized populations in ways not seen in other communities. Low-income, Black and Brown, Indigenous, non-English speaking, and communities of differing ability statuses have long been disproportionately disconnected from broadband. Local plans must include diverse voices in order to effectively address the variety of needs that contribute to the digital divide. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated gaps in access and adoption. Our country's digital inequities are the latest iteration of systemic inequities rooted in historic discrimination.

NCC communities understand that no person should be prevented from getting online simply as a result of their identity, location, or socioeconomic status. That is why municipalities coast to coast are designing and implementing digital equity plans that reflect community input and work toward ubiquitous connectivity. Implementing digital equity plans offers an opportunity to counter cyclical inequities by decreasing poverty levels, bolstering educational attainment, and promoting economic growth.

In 2022, NCC will support our members and communities nationwide as they prepare for the single largest broadband investment in our nation's history. Building upon the successes of communities highlighted in this yearbook and others, we can support local leaders working to understand every residents' needs and developing roadmaps to address them.

City of Long Beach, CA

- [Fireside chat](#) with Rebecca Kauma, Economic and Digital Inclusion Program Manager for the City of Long Beach.
- Report | [Digital Inclusion Roadmap](#)

City of Baltimore, MD

- [Remarks from Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott](#) at NCC's conference
- [Next Century Cities Is Working to Elevate Community-Based Perspectives on the Emergency Broadband Benefit](#) (FCC Ex Parte with Baltimore Community organizations and local officials)
- Report | [Digital Equity Framework](#)

City of San Antonio and Bexar County, TX

- Report | ["It is Time for the Heavy Lifting to Begin." SA Digital Connects Hosts Community Presentation Unveiling Digital Equity Plan and Roadmap](#)

City of Detroit, MI

- [Relationships are Central to Bridging the Digital Divide: A Candid Conversation with City of Detroit's Digital Inclusion Director](#)
- [The City of Detroit Continues to Set the Bar for Digital Equity and Inclusion](#)

City of Chula Vista, CA

- [Learning About Broadband Challenges and Opportunities from Chula Vista, California, and Botetourt County, Virginia](#)





next century cities' state work

In coalition with local governments, community organizations, and state leaders, NCC has remained engaged in ongoing broadband proceedings in California, reiterated the necessity of local authority over broadband infrastructure in Ohio and Idaho, and showcased the importance of municipal strategies in Colorado.

Even as social distancing and travel restrictions are lifted, a wide range of services will remain permanently online, revealing the pervasive need for ubiquitous connectivity. With new funding available for a range of projects, local governments at all stages of their broadband journeys continue developing innovative solutions and partnerships that address both access and adoption in their communities. NCC works to share resources and best practices, capture those stories, and elevate ongoing policy needs.

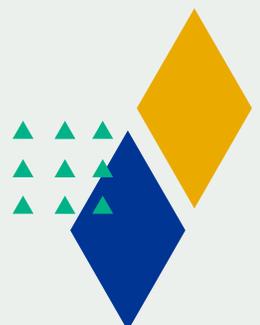
Looking forward to 2022, NCC plans on hosting member convenings, developing state-specific resources, supporting community-centered state policies, and continuing to work alongside municipalities nationwide as new opportunities and challenges arise.



state work

California

- **October 2020:** The California Public Utilities Commission opened a proceeding to pursue Governor Gavin Newsom's broadband for all goals, announced in [Executive Order N-73-20](#).
- **February 2021:** NCC [submitted its opening brief](#), elevating local perspectives and discussing community insights that can inform the CPUC's wildfire rebuild proposal.
- **May 2021:** NCC staff [met with Commissioner Martha Guzman Aceves](#) and members of her staff to discuss state promotion strategies for the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.
- **July 2021:** NCC [elevated the importance](#) of local digital equity and inclusion efforts during the CPUC's request for comment on digital redlining in California.
- **July 2021:** Governor Newsom [signed SB 156 into law](#), which establishes a statewide strategy for developing a middle-mile network and last-mile funding program.
- **August 2021:** NCC joined public interest allies in a [letter supporting SB 28](#), which allows the CPUC to collect more granular information from broadband providers which can inform statewide efforts.
- **September 2021:** NCC [filed comments and reply comments](#) on the state's role implementing its middle-mile network, stressing the importance of including local governments in the planning process.
- **October 2021:** Governor Newsom signed SB 4, which NCC supported through letters in [December 2020](#) and [March 2021](#). NCC [submitted CPUC comments](#) addressing the need for program flexibility and resource support for community-led projects.



Colorado

- [Colorado Cities and Counties Join NCC in Presentations Before the Colorado Broadband Advisory Board](#)

Massachusetts

- [In Waltham, Massachusetts, the Struggle For High-Speed, Affordable, and Reliable Broadband Must Be One That Promotes Digital Equity, Social Justice, and Democracy](#)
- Report | [Promoting Digital Equity in Massachusetts Gateway Cities](#)

Maryland

- [State and Local Officials Agree on the Need to Create a State Broadband Office in Maryland](#)
- Report | [Achieving Digital Equity in Baltimore](#)

New York

- In December 2021, NCC joined Access Now, Center for Media Justice dba MediaJustice, Common Sense, National Consumer Law Center, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, New America's Open Technology Institute, and the United Church of Christ Office of Communication, Inc. in an [Amicus Filing](#) supporting the State of New York's low-income Internet program mandate.

Hawaii

- ["Access, Literacy, and Livelihood:" Broadband Hui Leverages Public and Private Collaborations to Support Digital Equity for All Hawaii Residents](#)

Idaho

- [NCC Joins Letter Encouraging Greater Local Authority For Municipal Broadband Internet Service in Idaho](#)

Michigan

- [Next Century Cities Files Letter Supporting Proposal to Improve Broadband for Residents and Businesses on Beaver Island, Michigan](#)
- [Next Century Cities Urges Local Officials and Community Leaders to Identify Broadband Ambitions and Obstacles](#)

Ohio

- [Next Century Cities Releases Case Study Examining Ohio's Digital Divide](#)
- [What Broadband Advocacy in Ohio Means for Communities Nationwide](#)
- [Next Century Cities' Members Oppose Proposals to Prohibit Municipal Broadband Options in Ohio](#)
- [Next Century Cities Raises Importance of Community Partnerships with Cuyahoga County, Ohio](#)

Rhode Island

- [Connecting Rhode Island Means Overcoming Inaccurate Data, Leveraging Public Housing Partnerships to Reach Low-Income Residents](#)

Texas

- [Connecting the Heartland](#)
- [Expanding Broadband in Deep East Texas](#)

Vermont

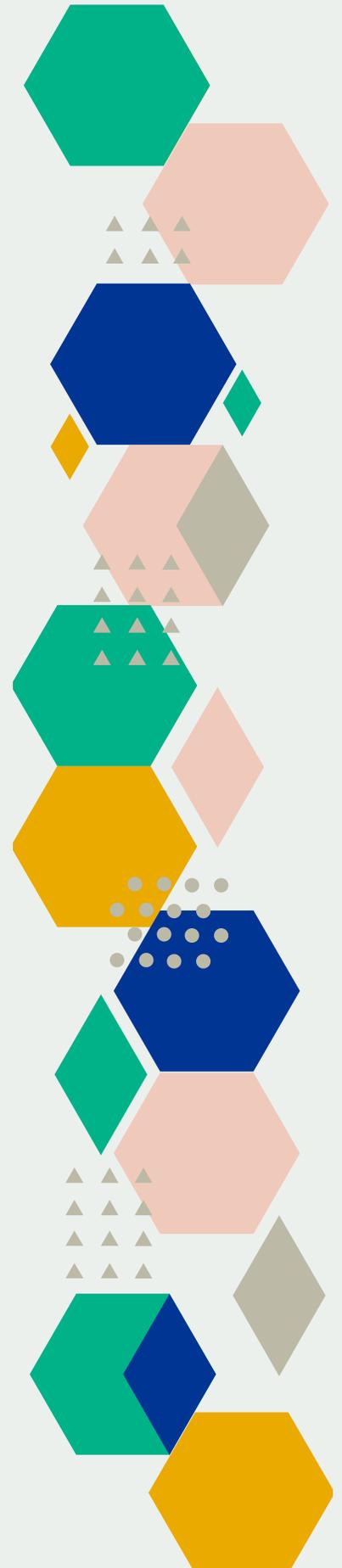
- [Innovative Intercity Collaborations Foster Improved Connectivity in Vermont](#)

West Virginia

- [Transforming Challenges into Lasting Connectivity Solutions in West Virginia](#)

Washington

- [What Washington's HB 1336 Means for Municipalities Across the U.S.](#)



state work



broadband and education

FCC Chair Jessica Rosenworcel began stressing pervasive inequities resulting from the Homework Gap long before the pandemic, but the sudden shift from in-person to distance learning thrust the issue into the spotlight in communities across the U.S. Since the pandemic began, mayors, city councils, schools, and libraries nationwide have worked to connect students who could not attend class online, and some states are now seeking [to counter the learning loss](#) that occurred during the pandemic.

Digital disparities have a pervasive impact on not only K-12 students, but also interrupt higher education opportunities. Brittany-Rae studies the role that higher education institutions play in addressing broadband inequities. During a [panel discussion moderated by Brittany-Rae](#) in June, Hubert Harris, Chief of Staff at Virginia State University; and Darrell McMillon, Vice President and Chief Information Officer at Delaware State University discussed HBCUs ongoing access and adoption needs. Chair Rosenworcel discussed the role that the Emergency Broadband Benefit could play in improving broadband affordability.

In September, Lukas [joined a conversation with the National Head Start Association](#), discussing the strategies to improve existing state and federal programs that support low-income and disconnected families, which also make up a large population within the Head Start network. Lukas explained that there are a number of existing state and federal programs that support low-income and disconnected families, emphasizing that parents and siblings of young learners need connectivity just as much as students.

During a [CDT Podcast in November](#), Francella discussed the Homework Gap, stating, “My work focuses not only on making sure that every resident in every community has access to high speed technology, but I’m also always concerned about making it a safe ecosystem once they get there.”

NCC celebrated Teacher Appreciation Week with a blog post [discussing the importance](#) of connecting educators with the broadband support they need to teach students during the pandemic. When many students across the country returned to in-person learning this fall, another blog post [called attention to the millions of students](#) who went missing during remote school last year and the strategies state and local governments are using to address lingering disparities.



convening for the common good



Next Century Cities is always looking for opportunities to convene diverse communities or share stories from our members. Conferences, panels, and other discussions are key tools in reaching a wide array of audiences that allows us to extend our reach beyond our website and mailing lists.

This year NCC hosted a digital conference and [academic pre-conference](#). The [pre-conference](#) brought together academics from across the nation to discuss their current research and answer each other's and the audience's questions. Each participant agreed that the FCC's definition of high-speed broadband should be updated and that there are many new opportunities for deployment on the horizon. The next day NCC hosted a virtual conference that included discussions on [new federal funding](#), [philanthropic partnerships in Texas](#), [what broadband advocacy means in Ohio](#), [a conversation with Detroit's digital inclusion officer](#), [what broadband challenges look like in California and Virginia](#), and many more.

NCC also joined organizational allies in a number of discussions and conferences this year. In April, Corian joined the Schools, Health, and Libraries Broadband Coalition to discuss the ways that [state and federal oversight of pole attachments](#) impact broadband deployment. Corian highlighted that flexible pole attachment policies enable local officials to make the best choices for their communities. In July, Lukas joined the [Knight Foundation's 2021 Smart Cities Lab](#) for a discussion on how local communities can prepare for the growth of smart cities. Lukas noted that broadband and digital inclusion strategies must work to design and build with communities rather than for them. He also discussed that multi-level partnerships between state, local, federal, and tribal leaders can develop comprehensive solutions that tackle the persistent challenges faced by local communities. Finally, he agreed with other panelists that more granular data is necessary to achieve universal broadband.

In July, [Corian spoke on a panel](#) hosted by TDI, a non-profit focused on advancing the voices of people who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, deaf-blind, and deaf with mobility issues in information and communications. Corian's comments focused on the importance of centralizing people with disabilities in digital inclusion strategies. They discussed the significance of improving broadband speeds and affordability, which can support accessible technology that enables residents to live comfortably and participate in the digital economy.



In August, [Lukas joined advocates from across the nation](#) for a panel hosted by Heartland Forward. The discussion focused on how each organization’s work can jointly help close the digital divide in America’s Heartland. [Lukas discussed](#) NCC’s continued commitment to support community-based broadband programs, helping municipal and community leaders to overcome resource constraints and outreach barriers that could hinder success.

Later in August, Ryan spoke on the keynote panel for the Mountain Connect Conference. The panel focused on the state of the broadband industry. [Ryan discussed](#) the importance of new federal funding opportunities, and that new resources must be distributed in ways that allow communities to develop broadband programs that meet their needs.

While at Mountain Connect, [Ryan and Lukas joined The Broadband Bunch Podcast](#). Both Ryan and Lukas weighed up the innumerable challenges that communities face in connecting residents. The more information and support that states and the federal government make available to municipal leaders, the more confidence local officials can have in making the best decisions for their communities.



In July 2021, Councilor Paz provided keynote remarks at Next Century Cities’ virtual conference.



Dr. Katy Garbee of the Texas Rural Funders moderated a discussion with Cassandra Huhn of the Borderplex Alliance and Lonnie Hunt of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments.



NCC’s virtual conference kicked off with an academic pre-conference event. Presenters shared research projects on various topics including broadband data, spectrum, tribal connectivity, and digital equity.



Above: The Next Century Cities team presented at the Wireless Infrastructure Association's 2021 Connect(X) Conference in Orlando, Florida. Click [here](#) to see our two-minute video recap of the event.

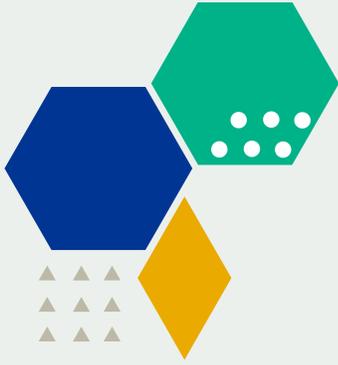
In October 2021, [Corian and Lukas](#) traveled to Orlando, Florida, to moderate a panel at the Wireless Infrastructure Association's Connect(X) conference, [discussing strategies](#) for using wireless technology to improve connectivity. The team also took the time to hear from members Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Orlando, Florida, and to gain their perspectives on 5G deployment and public-private partnerships.

[Lukas joined the Albuquerque chapter of the United Nations Foundation](#) for a virtual United Nations Day Celebration. Lukas' presentation emphasized the importance of incorporating local voices into regional connectivity strategies, including the work done in support of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

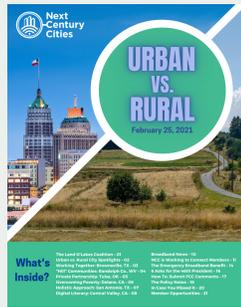
Francella and Corian traveled to Traverse City, Michigan in November to participate in the [Moonshot Broadband Summit](#) and provided opening remarks on overcoming connectivity challenges, and opportunities for local officials seeking to improve broadband data collection.

This is not an exhaustive list of the discussions and convenings that NCC has hosted or been a part of, but exemplifies a continual commitment to meet people where they are and shine a light on local broadband leadership from coast to coast.





revisiting our monthly newsletters



February 2021



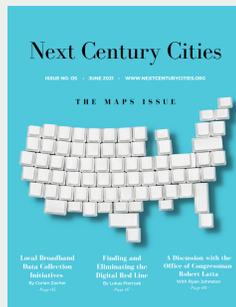
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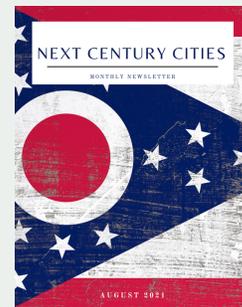
April 2021



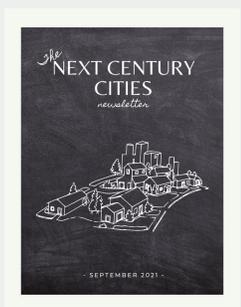
May 2021



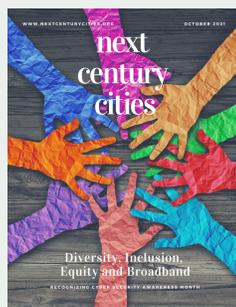
June 2021



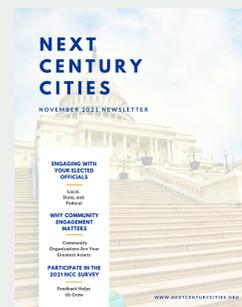
August 2021



September 2021



October 2021



November 2021

We can't wait to highlight local and state connectivity stories in 2022!



a proactive approach to broadband

What does broadband enable? Throughout 2021, the Next Century Cities team asked ourselves this question almost daily.

For hundreds of millions of people across the United States, broadband enabled learning, working, connecting, healing, and more. It enabled everyday people to connect with family and friends virtually when the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from doing so in person. As we look forward to 2022, we are envisioning a broadband enabled future that serves all people and in even more ways.

Over the last year, we have built new partnerships and fortified existing relationships with allies not only in the broadband industry, but across sectors. From local and state farm bureaus to organizations for aging populations and associations for people with disabilities, NCC has been listening and learning from experts.

Using our lessons learned, we will expand our footprint in policy by working with intersectional allies at the local, state, regional, Tribal, and national levels.

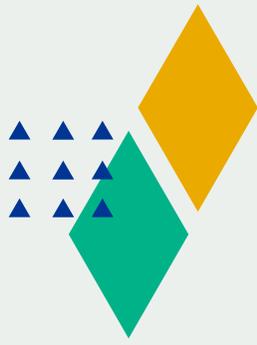
Our team will host a range of events that not only inform policymakers and elected officials, but provide a space for future leaders to dream big while implementing the incremental dreams required for a connected future.

As part of our ongoing efforts to support local leaders who are focused on fast, affordable, and reliable broadband, we will continue to elevate innovative thinkers to a national platform. Their work should inform federal and state broadband programs, and disrupt the way that we think about who deserves high-speed Internet connectivity.

In 2022, broadband will not only power work, learning, and telehealth, but could also revolutionize public safety, work to end homelessness, champion accessibility, and create interconnectedness far beyond what we envision.

A reactive approach to broadband policy will not support these aspirations. At Next Century Cities, we are focused on an affirmative vision of broadband programs that promote widespread access and adoption nationwide.





Next Century Cities' 2021 Publication Highlights

January

[The FCC Needs Local Insights to Ensure that the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program Reaches Low-Income Residents](#)

[The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#)

[Next Century Cities Responds to Cuyahoga County's RFI to Expand Affordable, High-Speed Broadband Services for Ohio Residents](#)

[Next Century Cities Raises Importance of Community Partnerships with Cuyahoga County, Ohio](#)

[Looking Forward to 2021, NCC Staff Discuss Broadband Mapping, Funding, and Service Models](#)

[How to Submit Comments to the Federal Communications Commission?](#)

[Next Century Cities Joins Public Interest Allies in a Letter Urging the Speedy Nomination and Confirmation of a Fifth FCC Commissioner](#)

[Next Century Cities Joins Inaugural Meeting With Acting FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel](#)

February

[What Washington's HB 1336 Means for Municipalities Across the U.S.](#)

March

[Next Century Cities Joins Letter Asking Congress to Weigh in on the 3.45 - 3.55 GHz Auction](#)

[NCC Joins Letter Encouraging Greater Local Authority For Municipal Broadband Internet Service in Idaho](#)

March

(continued)

[NCC Steadily Increases Engagement With State Broadband Authorities](#)

[NCC Joins NLC's Conference to Discuss Resources for Broadband and Digital Equity Programs](#)

[Next Century Cities Pens a Letter to President Biden and Vice President Harris Urging Leadership on a National Broadband Strategy](#)

[NCC and Allies Reiterate How the Verizon-TracFone Merger Could Shift the Entire Wireless Market and Impact Lifeline](#)

[NCC Presents on How the Digital Divide Impacts Privacy Rights Online](#)

[Emergency Broadband Benefit Explainer for Providers](#)

[Next Century Cities Reiterates Why Net Neutrality Protections Are an Essential Component of Universal Broadband Strategies](#)

[The National Telecommunications and Information Administration Hosts Webinar on Three New Broadband Funding Programs](#)

[Emergency Broadband Benefit Program: A Quick Look](#)

[Here's What the American Rescue Plan Could Do to Support Broadband In Your Community](#)

[Report: Communities Responding to Natural Disasters Through Network Resilience](#)

[Commissioner Alexandra Fernandez Navarro is Working to Change Broadband Outcomes in Puerto Rico](#)

[From Tuna to Telecommunications in American Samoa](#)

[Getting Broadband to the "Friendliest People in the Country" Could Transform Deep East Texas](#)

[New Connectivity Projects in the Wake of Resilience Woes in the U.S. Virgin Islands](#)

[The Digital Divide Will Make Us Sicker](#)

["Access, Literacy, and Livelihood:" Broadband Hui Leverages Public and Private Collaborations to Support Digital Equity for All Hawaii Residents](#)

April

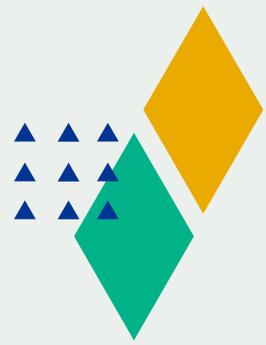
[Next Century Cities Hosts March Member Briefing on the Emergency Broadband Benefit and Upcoming NTIA Grant Programs](#)

[Next Century Cities Encourages FCC to Dream Big, Use American Rescue Plan Funding to Address the Digital Divide](#)

[Next Century Cities Joins the City of Detroit & Connect 313 Advocates For A Community Update on the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#)

[Next Century Cities Joins Public Interest Allies in Asking the FCC to Protect Lifeline for TracFone Subscribers](#)

[NCC Discusses Affordability, Broadband Data, Grant Funding, and Digital Equity with Local Officials to Working to Address Persistent Connectivity Gaps](#)



April (continued)

[The White House Releases a Fact Sheet on the American Jobs Plan, Recognizing Broadband As Essential Infrastructure](#)

[NCC Partners with Libraries Without Borders to Discuss Connectivity & Resilience in Puerto Rico With One of Its Most Prominent Broadband Advocates](#)

[NCC Submits Comments Emphasizing That As Long As Millions of Americans Do Not Have Reliable Broadband, Lifeline Voice Services Are Indispensable](#)

[The Internet of Things is helping communities combat climate change. Success depends on ubiquitous broadband connectivity.](#)

[Supporting Low-Income Access and Adoption in New York Will Have a Compound Effect In The Communities They Call Home](#)

[America's Most Rural State: Connecting Communities Across Maine](#)

[Innovative Intercity Collaborations Foster Improved Connectivity in Vermont](#)

[Leverett, Massachusetts: A Case Study in Future Proofing](#)

[Bristol's "All Heart" Attitude is Closing the Digital Divide Across Connecticut](#)

[Connecting Rhode Island Means Overcoming Inaccurate Data, Leveraging Public Housing Partnerships to Reach Low-Income Residents](#)

[Where Are They Now: Keene, New Hampshire](#)

May

[Next Century Cities Provides Congressional Testimony on Broadband Equity in Access and Affordability Solutions](#)

[Disconnected Students Cannot Wait For Emergencies to Give Teachers the Support They Need](#)

[Are Pole Attachment Rules Getting in the Way of Broadband Deployment?](#)

[Next Centuries Emphasizes the Importance of Accurate Broadband Data on "The Divide"](#)

[Next Century Cities Releases Broadband Mapping Report That Highlights State and Local Data Collection Efforts](#)

[Next Century Cities Discusses State Strategies for Promoting the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program With the California Public Utilities Commission](#)

[How Different Sectors Are Addressing the Digital Divide](#)

[NCC Joins Public Interest Allies Urging the FCC to Put the 12 GHz Band to Its Most Efficient Use](#)

[Next Century Cities Led a May 14th Emergency Broadband Benefit Day of Action](#)

[Treasury Department Releases Rules That May Lead to More Confusion Than Connectivity](#)

[State Broadband Maps Have Helped Shed Light on the Digital Divide in Georgia](#)

[E2D Is Promoting Social Justice by Expanding Computer Access and Literacy in North Carolina](#)

May (continued)

[From Memphis to the Appalachian Mountains: Varying Connectivity Challenges Across Tennessee](#)

[Power Through Broadband Partnerships Across Virginia](#)

[Transforming Challenges into Lasting Connectivity Solutions in West Virginia](#)

[State and Local Officials Agree: Creation of a State Broadband Office Will Help Increase Connectivity in Maryland](#)

June

[NCC Applauds State Digital Inclusion Efforts in New Mexico and Urges Local Officials to Share Best Practices](#)

[NCC Joins Letter Encouraging Governor Newsom to Support Local Governments in \\$7 Billion Broadband Infrastructure Proposal](#)

[NCC Joins NDIA's Effort to Educate Digital Inclusion Practitioners on Federal Broadband Policy](#)

[NCC Emphasizes the Economic Impact of the Digital Divide and Regional Broadband Solutions](#)

[Next Century Cities and Public Interest Allies Meet with FCC and USAC to Escalate Emergency Broadband Benefit Challenges](#)

[Next Century Cities' Members Oppose Proposals to Prohibit Municipal Broadband Options in Ohio](#)



June (continued)

[NCC Moderates a Discussion on how HBCU Partnerships Could Improve Connectivity for Students, Administrators, and the Communities That They Serve](#)

[The Work is Far From Over: Updates on Local Broadband Data Collection Initiatives](#)

[Finding and Eliminating the Digital Red Line](#)

[Leaders in Broadband Mapping: A Discussion with the Office of Congressman Robert Latta](#)

[Celebrating Pride Online](#)

July

[Next Century Cities Stresses the Significance of Local Digital Equity Efforts Before the California Public Utilities Commission](#)

[Broadband Scholars Gather for Next Century Cities' First Academic Convening](#)

[What Broadband Advocacy in Ohio Means for Communities Nationwide](#)

[Relationships are Central to Bridging the Digital Divide: A Candid Conversation with the City of Detroit's Digital Inclusion Director](#)

[Learning About Broadband Challenges and Opportunities from Chula Vista, California, and Botetourt County, Virginia](#)

[Building Sustainable Solutions for Digital Inclusion with Local Leadership in Austin, Texas](#)

[Imagining a Bold, Connected Future With the Advocates Who Are Working to Expand Digital Opportunities](#)

July (continued)

[NTIA Is Promoting Funding Opportunities for Communities on the Wrong Side of the Digital Divide](#)

[Advocates, Community Leaders, and Philanthropic Partners Are Working to Change Connectivity Outcomes in Texas](#)

August

[In Waltham, Massachusetts, the Struggle For High-Speed, Affordable, and Reliable Broadband Must Be One That Promotes Digital Equity, Social Justice, and Democracy](#)

[Expanding Broadband In the Rural South Requires Holistic Broadband Programs Coupled with Long-Term Community Outreach Strategies](#)

[Closing the Digital Divide Today to Prepare for Tomorrow](#)

[Broadband for All Strategies Must Include People With Disabilities](#)

[Libraries Can Be a Vanguard for Telehealth.](#)

[Colorado Cities and Counties Join NCC in Presentations Before the Colorado Broadband Advisory Board](#)

[Next Century Cities Files Letter Supporting Proposal to Improve Broadband for Residents and Businesses on Beaver Island, Michigan](#)

[NCC Joins Mountain Connect to Discuss the State of the Broadband Industry and Visions for the Future](#)

[Next Century Cities Submits Reply Comments Urging the FCC to Preserve the Lifeline Voice-Only Discount](#)

September

[Next Century Cities Joins Impact 6 and Broadband Advocates to Discuss the Digital Divide's Impact on Education](#)

[The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Breakdown of the Historic Bipartisan Broadband Legislation](#)

[Back-To-School: Re-Connecting with America's Disconnected Students](#)

[The Link Between Labor and Broadband](#)

[Next Century Cities Is Working to Elevate Community-Based Perspectives on the Emergency Broadband Benefit](#)

[Closing the Digital Divide for Early Childhood Education: A Conversation with the National Head Start Association](#)

[Next Century Cities Submits Reply Comments Asking the FCC to Mediate 3G Network Shutdowns](#)

[A simple and easy mobile map challenge process will promote municipal participation.](#)

[Planning for California's \\$6 Billion Broadband Investment is Underway. What Does Your Community Need?](#)

October

["It is Time for the Heavy Lifting to Begin." SA Digital Connects Hosts Community Presentation Unveiling Digital Equity Plan and Roadmap](#)

[The City of Detroit Continues to Set the Bar for Digital Equity and Inclusion](#)

October (continued)

[Digital Access is Vital: A Conversation with Lydia X.Z. Brown](#)

[Empowering People With Disabilities Through Digital Inclusion](#)

[Designing New Network Deployments with Security in Mind](#)

[As America's Unhoused Population Continues to Rise, So Does the Need to Develop Targeted Broadband Strategies](#)

[The NCC Team Visits Connect\(X\) to Underscore the Importance of Wireless Connectivity](#)

[Celebrating Global Citizenship and the Fight for Universal Broadband on UN Day 2021](#)

November

[Students Struggling With the Homework Gap Need Reliable Service, Educational Devices, and Safe Digital Spaces That Preserve Their Privacy](#)

[Next Century Cities Submits FCC Comments Highlighting Anti-Competitive Nature of Exclusive Revenue Sharing and Wiring Agreements in MTEs](#)

[Next Century Cities Pressures the FTC to Prioritize Consumer Data Protection](#)

[Next Century Cities Emphasizes the Value of Partnering with Local Governments in Designing California's Broadband Grant Program](#)

[NCC Joins NDIA and Allies: Loans, Investments, Or Services That Support Digital Access For Low- And Moderate-Income Households Are Necessary Community Investments](#)

November (continued)

[Next Century Cities Urges Local Officials and Community Leaders to Identify Broadband Ambitions and Obstacles](#)

[NCC Emphasizes the Importance of Digital Inclusion Among Hispanic and Latinx Households](#)

[Next Century Cities Connects Local Leaders to FCC Geoffrey Commissioner Starks](#)

[What Could the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Mean for NCC Members?](#)

[Next Century Cities Joins the Marconi Society for a Panel Discussion on the Future of Crowdsourced Broadband Data Mapping](#)

[Engaging with Local, State, and Federal Officials Through Broadband Surveys and Speed Tests](#)

[There Are Various Ways for Local Leaders to Get Involved in Federal Broadband Policy Making](#)

December

[Emergency Broadband Benefit Explainer for Nontraditional Providers](#)

[NCC Submits Comments Advocating for an Effective and Inclusive Affordable Connectivity Program](#)

[NCC Highlights the Importance of Community Broadband Planning at Promise Neighborhoods National Network Conference](#)

[Network Resilience to Natural Disasters Starts with Strong Federal Planning](#)



Next Century Cities



Year in Review

