

## How Municipalities Are Changing Broadband Outcomes for Residents

Discussion with Corian Zacher, Senior Policy Counsel for Next Century Cities and Brian Donoghue, Deputy Director for Next Century Cities

Why we need to make room for new voices at our planning tables - a few community leaders who are making a difference:

- ACC Fellow Olivia Hayworth "My biggest projects right now are working with our new digital inclusion alliance to plan and execute a regional broadband survey to then take and turn into a regional broadband strategic plan."
- Another ACC fellow Liz Lima developed a map that shows how many residents have enrolled in the affordable connectivity program by zip code vs. how many people are eligible to enroll, helping digital navigators target areas that need attention
- Kathryn Grenier, a Town Manager from Condon, Oregon, who recognized the need for broadband improvements in her community and has devoted her personal time to exploring solutions
- Luce Rubio, who organizes communications for Dona Ana County, New Mexico, and has been instrumental in bringing together broadband advocates from across the state to partner on projects
- One way new voices are being cultivated is through the [Digital Equity Leadership Lab](#), which brought together 25 Baltimoreans to learn about the workings of the internet, and the work to democratize access around the country.

Local and state policy issues that still need attention

- Using state and local maps to counter federal data: Local governments are collecting data about what residents think about the service they have, whether they have service, and what they need to fully participate in digital ecosystems.
- Affordability
- Competition: Most people have only 1-2 providers, which means that prices are higher for everyone
- Affordable Connectivity Program - State and local governments are playing important roles in promoting the program and reporting residents' experiences to the FCC to improve the program
- Local self-determination: It's not just about municipal broadband restrictions, state restrictions on local franchise agreements and pole attachments are also important for communities to hold providers accountable to serving their entire community.

Innovative partnership to highlight:

San Antonio's [SA Digital Connects](#) started when the pandemic brought together a group of public-private partners from across San Antonio and surrounding communities passionate about improving digital equity. When the group was getting off the ground, local leaders and their private sector partners found more than 140 organizations working on various aspects of broadband access and adoption, including schools, the health-care industry, city departments, county departments, military groups, banks and more.