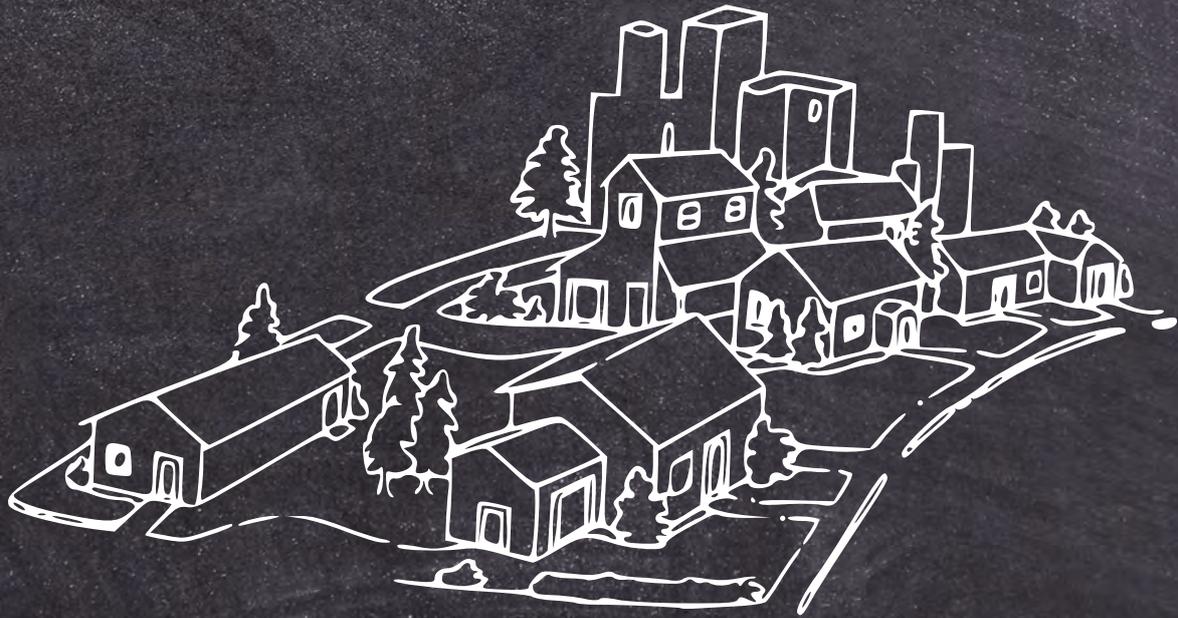


the
NEXT CENTURY
CITIES
newsletter



- SEPTEMBER 2021 -

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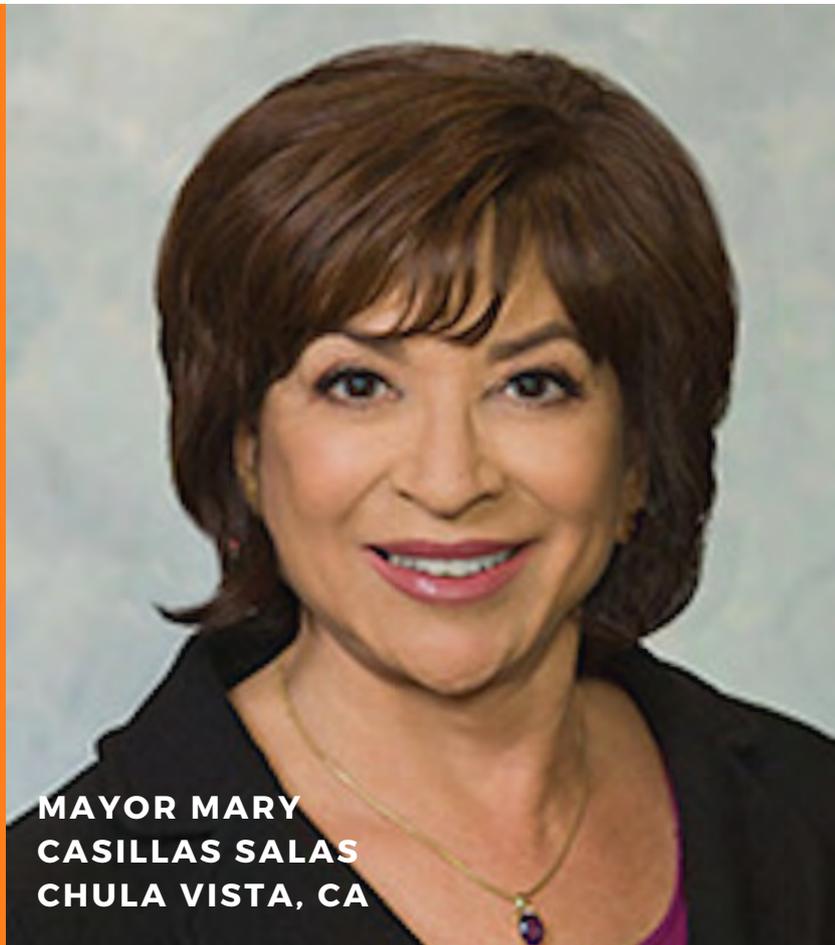
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NCC RECOGNIZES HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Local leaders are making a difference.



**MAYOR MARY
CASILLAS SALAS
CHULA VISTA, CA**



**RICKY SANTIAGO
LOUISVILLE, KY**

National Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated annually from September 15th to October 15th. It is an opportunity to highlight Hispanic/Latinx history, culture, and achievements that should be also recognized throughout the year. In this month's newsletter, we are putting a spotlight on Latinx leaders in the Next Century Cities network that are working to close the digital divide.



THE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

By Ryan Johnston

On August 10, 2021, the Senate passed a landmark \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill known as the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#). The proposed legislation includes a \$65 billion investment in fast and reliable broadband infrastructure. States and municipalities would also have access to resources that support affordability, adoption, and digital inclusion programs.

As Kathryn de Wit, Project Director for the Broadband Access Initiative at Pew Charitable Trusts [noted](#), “the new infrastructure package is the culmination of over a decade of research into the digital divide.” For the first time, Congress has departed from its long-held practice that infrastructure deployment will cure the digital inequities. Now, in addition to deployment there is dedicated funding to ensure affordability, device access, and research into the root causes of the digital divide.

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program

A majority of the funding in the broadband infrastructure package is slated for the creation of the “Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (‘BEAD’).” This is a \$42.45 billion program that would be administered through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and provide states with funds to advance broadband deployment and digital equity goals. What’s more, this program tasks the NTIA to provide states with support to develop grant applications and funding distribution procedures. The program also includes a 10% set-aside to expand digital infrastructure in high-cost areas.

Continue reading Ryan's breakdown of the historic legislation [here](#).



BACK TO SCHOOL

*Re-Connecting with America's
Disconnected Students*

by Lukas Pietrzak

Every year, back-to-school elicits a feeling of excitement and nervousness for over 50 million students across the country. This year, those feelings are even more potent. For a year and a half, over 90% of students in the US participated in some form of distance learning and they are stepping foot in new classrooms and new schools for the very first time.

As students return to in-person education, they return to a performance gap that has been magnified and intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout distance learning, students relied on a combination of high-speed broadband, functioning internet-enabled devices, and the requisite skills and support system to thrive in a digital environment. However, for millions of students, these three tools were out of reach and distance learning was a constant battle. For three million students, in particular, it was enough to go missing from their classrooms.

Click [here](#) to read more about why broadband access and adoption is critical during the 2021 school year, and how local leaders are working to address the digital divide.



The Link Between Labor and Broadband

by Corian Zacher

Many states and local governments view digital connectivity as a necessary prerequisite for economic development. Small businesses, agricultural production, and manufacturing all require broadband to conduct daily activities. The pandemic shed light on the many ways in which disparities in broadband access and adoption can impact employment opportunities, vocational training, and job searches. Both have a direct impact on which communities can meaningfully participate in a digital economy.

When [PC Magazine ranked U.S. cities](#) earlier this year to determine which were the best locations for remote work, it considered the minimum price for Gigabit broadband as 20% of the total score. Communities with municipal broadband, including Fort Collins, Colorado, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, ranked highly on the list. Though the national broadband standard currently remains 25/3 Mbps, funding is beginning to prioritize 100/100 Mbps projects.



Help Your Community Join the Fight For Fair Internet



Together with Consumer Reports, Next Century Cities (NCC) is helping document the **real** cost of Internet subscriptions across the country. We need input from you.

We know that in communities across our network, affordability remains the main barrier to broadband adoption. However, we lack data on those **real** prices. Together we can change that.

NCC has joined with dozens of organizations on a groundbreaking project that could ultimately reveal if Americans are actually getting what they're paying for when it comes to high-speed Internet service.

We need to make sure all municipalities in NCC's network are represented. As leaders of your communities, you can help to expand the reach of the project. The more data we receive, the more we can collectively advocate for everyone across the country.

- 1) Share this call to action with your community.
- 2) Set aside ten minutes to conduct a speed test.
- 3) Submit a copy of your Internet bill to [Consumer Reports' data collection portal](#).

Any data provided through this study will remain **anonymous**. Any personal information collected is only used to understand demographics. Contact Lukas Pietrzak, NCC's Program Manager of Partnerships and Campaigns, at Lukas@nextcenturycities.org with questions.

[Click Here for a Sample One-Pager](#)

[Share this link for data submission](#)

[Click Here for Additional Resources](#)

[Click Here for a Sample Email](#)

[Click Here for Sample Social Media Posts](#)

SHARE YOUR EBB SUCCESS STORIES!

A few months ago, we asked local officials to help the Federal Communication Commission develop the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. NCC's member municipalities highlighted the importance of helping low-income households maintain broadband Internet services and what their communities needed to see in program rules. We also created a webpage to ensure that local and state and officials could learn about effective ways to promote enrollment. Today, over five million residents are receiving much-needed assistance with their broadband bills.

Tell us how the Emergency Broadband Benefit program is making an impact in your community. Share testimonials, articles, press releases, social media posts, etc. with us via info@nextcenturycities.org.

There are so many creative ways in which community leaders are working to ensure that every eligible household finds out about the program. Check out a new public service announcement from Line Break Media, a part of Media Justice's network.

Emergency Broadband Week of Action

September 27, 2021 - October 1, 2021

As the new school year is beginning, many schools continue to rely on hybrid class structures and distance learning programs. Online learning requires that students have access to a robust Internet connection, which may still be out of reach for millions of students.

On September 27th, Next Century Cities is joining a week of action hosted by Freedman Consulting to promote the Emergency Broadband Benefit ("EBB"). We need your municipality's help to ensure that every eligible household finds out about the program and how to enroll.



Distributing a press release to inform residents about EBB enrollment.



Submitting an op-ed to local media outlets describing the EBB's impact on your community.



Disseminating social media toolkits to build awareness.



Sharing flyers for public bulletin boards, libraries, senior centers, social service offices, and other community locations.



Providing backpack letters for students and families to learn about the EBB through schools.



Hosting EBB enrollment and awareness events.



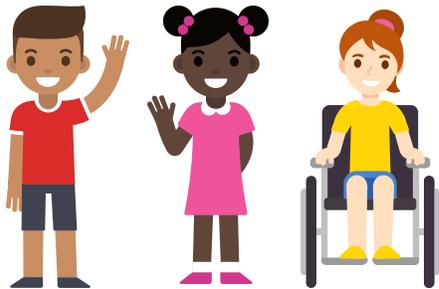
Conduct training for community leaders that can help to support enrollment.



Identifying local trusted messengers to share EBB program information.



Emergency Broadband Benefit Resources



The FCC developed materials to promote the Emergency Broadband Benefit to students and their families.

The materials include school posters, bookmarks, handouts and Pell Grant and school lunch and breakfast program specific flyers, and social media posts and images.



The new materials are available in English and in Spanish. They also include Tribal-specific flyers to promote the increased monthly benefit available to eligible households on qualifying Tribal lands.

The state of Maryland announced a \$400 million investment in closing the digital divide, including its own statewide EBB program which will provide an additional \$15 discount to people currently enrolled in EBB.



Do You Need Help with EBB Resources? Freedman Consulting Can Help.



1

Writing templates for op-eds and press releases;

2

Creating flyers and drafting backpack letters;

3

Drafting communication materials and outreach strategies;

4

Create toolkits for hosting local outreach events and social media campaigns;

5

Providing training resources and scheduling training sessions; and/or

6

Hosting/convening any coordination sessions with local leaders.

FYI

If you would like to learn more about the Emergency Broadband Benefit Week of Action or how you can get involved, contact Ryan Johnston (ryan@nextcenturycities.org) or Conor McKay (mckay@tfreedmanconsulting.com).



:

Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Tri-Caucus Back-to-School Push: Virtual Congressional District Staff Briefing

Organized by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and Common Cause, and co-hosted by the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and Congressional Black Caucus

September 29, 2021
2pm ET

Speakers:

Joi Chaney, National Urban League

Martin Rivera, National Hispanic Media Coalition

Emily Chi, Asian Americans Advancing Justice|AAJC

Olivia Wein, National Consumer Law Center

Moderator: *Anita Banerji, Consultant to The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights*

This virtual briefing will discuss ways you can increase participation in the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program, an FCC program that provides eligible households a discount of up to \$50 per month toward broadband services (up to \$75 per month for those on Tribal lands). We need families and households connected digitally and still we have time this fall to sign them up! Your offices can play a critical role in spreading the word to your constituents!

This briefing will provide:

- An overview of the EBB program
- Eligibility criteria, and application processes
- Outreach strategies to help reach marginalized communities across the country
- Information and resources to share with constituents and social media materials

[RSVP HERE](#)

A link to the briefing will be provided through Zoom after you RSVP. **Please contact Anita Banerji at anita.banerji@gmail.com for more information or questions.**



NCC Elevates Local Perspectives

Lifting Up Community Perspectives at Mountain Connect. The annual Mountain Connect conference took place in Keystone, Colorado, this past August. Next Century Cities' Policy Counsel for Federal Programs, Ryan Johnston, participated in the conference's keynote panel titled "The State of the Industry." Other panelists included Fiber Broadband Association's Gary Bolton, Wireless Internet Service Providers Association's Claude Aiken, NTCA - The Rural Broadband Association's Adam Jorde, and ACA Connects' John Higginbotham. The discussion was moderated by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance's Chris Mitchell. Ryan's remarks focused on the importance of new federal funding opportunities placing much-needed broadband funding into the hands of under-resourced municipalities nationwide. Head over to Mountain Connect's [Twitter feed](#) for a real-time recap of the panel and conference.

Protecting Lifeline's Voice Services. On August 17th, Next Century Cities [filed reply comments](#) urging the FCC to continue support for voice-only services through the Lifeline program. Specifically, the letter highlights the following points: Low-income consumers that are disconnected will be forced into more expensive post-paid or bundled service plans that they may not be able to afford; Voice services may be the only link that some consumers have to emergency responders. Removing voice-only services may cut these consumers off from potentially life-saving services; Consumer personal and financial situations are constantly changing. Eliminating a voice-only option could inadvertently disconnect consumers who are going through some of the most difficult circumstances of their lives.

Supporting Broadband Expansion Efforts in St. James Township. Next Century Cities submitted a letter supporting a proposal from St. James Township and Peaine Township to bring fiber-to-the-home service to residents of Beaver Island, Michigan. Nationwide, residents in remote areas often face slow Internet speeds, spotty connections, and high prices. With the shift toward online work, learning, healthcare, and more, residents in remote areas like Beaver Island and others need consistent, affordable, high-quality service available at home in order to fully participate in society. Read NCC's letter of support [here](#).

Collaborating with Heartland Forward. NCC's Lukas Pietrzak [recently joined advocates from across the country](#) to discuss the ways advocates could work together to close the digital divide in America's Heartland. Panelists highlighted initiatives being implemented across Heartland Forward's member region, an area of 20 states in the middle of the United States. The discussion connected attendees with programs and organizations that create lasting change for America's unserved and underserved communities. Watch the full discussion [here](#).

Creating Peer to Peer Learning Opportunities for Local Officials. Corian Zacher, NCC's Policy Counsel for State and Local Initiatives, joined Mark Pfaffinger, Chief Information Officer for Larimer County; Richard Holt, City Councilor and Fiber Commission Chair for the City of Centennial; Shannon Haynes, Assistant Town Manager for the Town of Breckenridge; and Chad Crager, Director of Broadband for the City of Fort Collins in a presentation before the [Colorado Broadband Advisory Board](#) (BAB). Corian discussed NCC's May 2021 publication Broadband Mapping in the US: Local, State, and Federal Methods and Contradictions, reiterating the state's important role in collecting usable data on access and adoption for local governments. You can watch the full meeting [here](#), and the presentation is available [here](#).



MEMBER OPPORTUNITIES

RFI | The Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government has issued a request for information for the deployment of broadband infrastructure and broadband services in Central Kentucky Counties. Submissions must be received via the [submission portal](#) by 2:00 p.m. CST on **September 27, 2021**. Details of the request can be found [here](#). Questions should be sent via email to Terry S. Barnes, PMP, MBA at terry.barnes@barnespm.com.

GRANT FUNDING | The Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) began accepting applications for three new grant programs made possible by emergency pandemic funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Funding totals at least \$1.8 million and is provided by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) under ARPA. Texas libraries are encouraged to apply through TSLAC's [online grants management program](#) **by Oct. 1, 2021**.

CONFERENCE | Register for the National Tribal Broadband Summit today! The Department of the Interior (DOI), in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture, Department of Transportation, the Federal Communications Commission, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the White House Council for Native American Affairs will convene tribal broadband industry experts to discuss how to make the most use of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant funds, American Rescue Plan Act funds, and other Federal funding opportunities for broadband. Experts will discuss how to plan for the future of Tribal broadband networks and digital economies. The Summit takes place on **September 17th, September 24th, and October 1st, 2021**. Register for the Summit [here](#). Find additional details about the event [here](#).

CONFERENCE | On **October 27, 2021**, The Association of Public Land Grant Universities (APLU) [Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement](#) will host ***Making it Count: Applying Science to Support Universal Affordable Broadband Adoption***, a conference featuring presentations on how to structure, monitor, and evaluate the new suite of internet access and adoption programs made available by the **Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021**. Additional registration information is forthcoming.

TALENT SEARCH FOR BROADBAND EXPERTISE

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY | Literacy Minnesota seeks [proposals](#) from government agencies, nonprofits, and Tribal Nations interested in hosting one or more full-time AmeriCorps VISTA members to support digital literacy programs and services for low-income communities. Organizations interested in applying to serve as host sites should complete [this form](#) to receive additional information. Host site applications are due by **October 1, 2021**.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS | Officials in Topeka, Kansas, have begun their search for [Digital and Tech Navigators](#). The Navigators will support families throughout the community in their digital access efforts by providing technical assistance and support. Applicants can learn more about the openings and access the application [here](#). The positions are listed as "[Technical Navigator \(User System Consultant III\) - Community Engagement](#)" and "[Community Engagement Program Coordinator](#)" on the site.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT | The [California Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy](#) (OBDL) seeks to hire an [Information Technology Specialist](#). The Specialist will report to the Deputy Director of the Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy and will work on the statewide open-access middle-mile network and last-mile broadband infrastructure initiatives on behalf of OBDL.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT | Connecticut's Office of State Broadband opened their search for a [Research Analyst](#). The Analyst will focus on regulatory and policy issues related to broadband availability, affordability, and adoption. The research will also involve advocacy on consumer issues involving cable and telecommunications providers. The position will remain open until **September 28, 2021**.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT | The State of Connecticut seeks a [Broadband Mapping Coordinator](#) to develop the data and mapping tools necessary to bridge the digital divide for education, employment, health and well-being for residents. The application portal closes on **September 30, 2021**.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT | The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is hiring a [Research and Policy Analyst](#). The position reports to the Director of Technology Policy and will help shape the research agenda of the Technology Policy Program.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT | The Kramden Institute seeks an [Executive Director](#). Applications will be accepted through **October 4, 2021**. Interested applicants should direct questions to Fred Stang, Senior Associate at the moss+ross firm via email fstang@mossandross.com.

