

Why is Broadband Essential?

Broadband & Community Growth



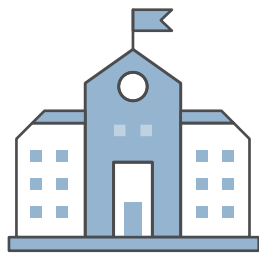
Broadband is the road to the future. Rivers, roads, railroads, & air travel have played an important role in our lives. Broadband is the next step as it complements the past and embraces the future.



The Importance of Broadband: Access to high-speed and affordable broadband positively impacts our smaller communities. Many aspects of our day-to-day lives are greatly improved in areas such as education, health, public safety, government and cultural enrichment. Without proper access to broadband, communities struggle to keep pace in an age of ever-increasing technological dependence and the global market place.

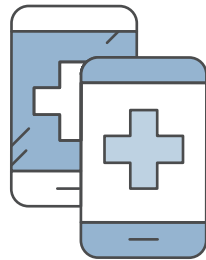
Why Broadband Should Be a Priority

Companies looking to relocate often require a direct fiber connection and redundancy.



Higher Quality Education

The internet offers the opportunity to broaden educators' reach and resources beyond the bookshelves in their classrooms. For primary and secondary schools, education outside the classroom can be challenging. 7 out of 10 teachers now regularly assign homework that requires internet access, according to a report from the Federal Communication Commission. Broadband expands education beyond the traditional classroom, opening opportunities for online certificates and access to distance learning from around the world.



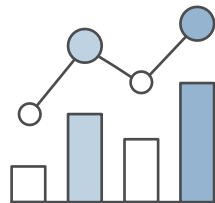
Improved Health

Equitable access to healthcare depends on affordable broadband for all. Yet, according to the American Public Health Association, "34 million people are disadvantaged – especially in health status – simply because they lack access to appropriate broadband." Individuals living in rural areas with chronic health challenges can be at an even greater disadvantage without access to remote monitoring and other broadband-enabled devices.



Economy

Web-based retail and marketing. Cloud-based data storage. Video conferencing. Global file sharing. Remote workers. These are a few of the many growing reasons why the economic impact of broadband is huge and no longer a luxury. A 2021 UW-Madison Extension report—Broadband & the Wisconsin Economy—references studies that show how broadband in rural areas is important for attracting new businesses, fostering entrepreneurship, enhancing farm profits, and increasing the value of rural housing. The report also suggests that increased broadband availability has a positive impact on employment and population growth.



Improved Quality of Life

Today, the average American household has 25 connected devices which range from cell phones and computers to televisions and appliances (www.corning.com/muni). Broadband also improves employment rates and supports higher-paying jobs, continuing education, and entrepreneurship.

Research shows 5G will create 4.6 million jobs from now to 2034.





Some Ways Broadband Helps Rural Communities

Small Businesses: In rural America, small businesses create nearly two-thirds of available jobs; broadband access is increasingly important as these businesses become more technology-dependent. A University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Missouri-Columbia report found that an increase in female entrepreneurship and broadband access are directly related as many women still act as primary caregivers in the home while continuing to work professionally.

Real Estate: Housing with broadband can help communities attract workers that their businesses need. According to the REALTORS Association of NW Wisconsin, the number one question asked of their rural realtors is “How is the Broadband?”. Fast internet has climbed to the top of the list for prospective home buyers with nearly 90% indicating it was very important to them. Washington state now requires home sellers to disclose whether their home has internet connection and what provider they use. Land availability and curb appeal is no longer enough. The Pierce County Economic Development Corporation conducted a study that identified a potential \$2.5 to \$3.7 million increase in property values with improved broadband access, benefiting local jurisdictions through increased tax revenue.



Agriculture: Like most industries, food production has seen an increase in technological capabilities over the past several decades. Broadband access allows Wisconsin’s farmers to participate in online marketing, purchasing, selling, and use “smart farming” technology. A 2020 FCC study found a positive correlation between broadband availability and crop yields due to precision agriculture. The Executive Director of Wisconsin Agri-Business Association says, “rural broadband has long been likened to the rural electrification of the 1930’s.”

Tourism: Tourism and outdoor recreation is a major contributor to the rural economy; which is also changing due to broadband. Touchless pay has become the norm in retail, requiring high-speed internet. Public access Wi-Fi has become essential for many travelers, with 85% of leisure travelers deciding on their activities after they arrive at their destination, according to www.thinkwithgoogle.com. Another societal shift that bodes well for tourist economies is the “work-from-anywhere” policy, which allows people to take longer vacations or even move permanently to their cabin communities.

