



Connect Iowa, Iowa Economic Development Authority Launch New Advisory Committee on Broadband

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New advisory committee kicks off intensive community broadband expansion program

Des Moines, IA – This week, Connect Iowa and the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) convened the first broadband advisory committee meeting, kicking off a new community engagement effort to expand broadband access, adoption, and use across the state. Community leaders from around Iowa are now joining forces to oversee the expansion of high-speed Internet to every corner of the state. Connect Iowa's new broadband advisory committee includes elected officials, public service agency representatives, providers, educators, librarians, and business people. Their common goal is to support and guide the Connect Iowa initiative.

During the meeting broadband stakeholders discussed the history of broadband expansion in the state, and the plan for bringing broader access to Iowa communities in the coming year. The meeting was a great success and set the groundwork for how diverse broadband stakeholders can work together to further progress across the state in 2012.

"The inauguration of our broadband advisory committee marks an important step for Connect Iowa and signals our commitment to closing the digital gap that persists in our communities," says Connect Iowa Program Manager Amy Kuhlert. "We are excited to be bolstered by the support of key stakeholders representing all areas of economic interest. Connect Iowa, with the support of the advisory committee, is undertaking the important work of building grassroots regional planning to grow and expand technology use in communities across the state."

The closing of the digital adoption gap in Iowa will have a significant impact on the way citizens learn, work, and live their daily lives. According to Connect Iowa's latest broadband availability research from the 2011 Iowa [residential](#) and [business](#) surveys:

- 37% of Iowa households still do not subscribe to broadband at home
- 45% of Iowans living in rural areas do not subscribe to broadband service at home
- 23,000 Iowa businesses are still not using broadband despite the fact that Iowa businesses that use broadband make an average of \$259,000 more in annual revenue than businesses without

"The first meeting of the advisory council was really interesting because there were so many people representing different pieces of the broadband puzzle around the table," said committee member and Iowa State Librarian Mary Wegner. "I am excited that we will be working together to improve broadband adoption in Iowa, improve the speed, and get more Iowans using broadband. The most important part, and the part where libraries really come into the picture, is to help Iowans really understand the limitless opportunities and what they can do when they have access to high-speed Internet."

Connect Iowa, in collaboration with the Iowa Economic Development Authority, is working with broadband providers and other public and private partners to speed up the expansion of broadband in unserved and underserved areas. The organization is pinpointing remaining gaps in Iowa's broadband availability and supporting the development of a statewide plan for the deployment and adoption of technology that promises economic development and better quality of life for Iowa residents.

The committee's first meeting kicked off a week of intensive training for a new grassroots program that Connect Iowa will be unveiling next week. The committee expects to meet quarterly with the next meeting planned for April.

If you have suggestions regarding how technology can be improved to better serve your community, Connect Iowa wants to hear from you. To submit comments, ideas, or gain access to the initiative's many online tools and resources, please visit www.connectiowa.org or contact Amy Kuhlert at akuhlert@connectiowa.org.

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About Connect Iowa: Connect Iowa is a subsidiary of Connected Nation and operates as a nonprofit in the state of Iowa to promote broadband access, adoption, and use. The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) is leading the initiative to increase broadband Internet access throughout rural Iowa. Connect Iowa was commissioned by the state to work with all broadband providers in Iowa to create detailed maps of broadband coverage and develop a statewide plan for the deployment and adoption of broadband. For more information visit: www.connectiowa.org.

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