Connect Iowa provides community broadband planning through the [Connected Community Engagement Program](#). Since 2012, Connect Iowa has seen an increase in participation, as more communities have identified the need to build broadband planning into their long-range economic growth strategy.
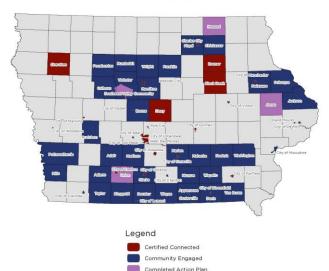
Demand increased significantly in the fall of 2013, when Iowa Governor Terry Branstad endorsed the Connected program as a component of his 'Connect Every Iowan' initiative and then, in 2014, the Governor expanded his broadband initiative by creating the 'Connect Every Acre' plan in order to focus on the importance of rural broadband coverage.

CONNECTED
CONNECT IOWA
Community Engagement Status
Current as of April 23, 2015

Legend
- Certified Connected
- Community Engaged
- Completed Action Plan
- No Project Launched

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Connected Teams Include:

- Local government officials
- Business owners
- Schools
- Libraries
- Chambers of commerce
- Economic development corporations
- Farm Bureau members
- Healthcare institutions
- Emergency management
- Native tribes
- Internet service providers
- Higher education
  And many others

While several counties have been engaged in the program, unique to Iowa is the interest from individual cities to participate in the planning process. To date, 15 cities and 3 counties have earned the designation of a certified Connected community by reaching scoring levels indicating advanced broadband access, adoption, and use.

- 65 Iowa communities had some level of introduction to and/or engagement in the Connected program.
- 24 Iowa communities completed a technology action plan helping establish continued broadband expansion based on the community's broadband access, adoption, and use needs.
- Over 321 community team members were directly involved with community planning, and 1,035 stakeholders statewide were kept informed through quarterly newsletters of the Connected process.

Connected Case Studies

Indianola: Indianola became Iowa's first certified Connected community. Through the assessment process, several priority initiatives were identified, including the development of a public-private partnership focused on the deployment of broadband service. The collaborative partnership was made up of a local college, the city economic development organization, and the local municipal broadband utility. The resulting project, EMERGE, was launched.

The EMERGE project includes:
- An incubator-in-a-box virtual platform to attract ideas, mentors, and financial capital.
- On-campus college programs to attract and engage students and integrate them into the metro economy.
- The development of a proposal for a center where ideas, ventures, and opportunities are exchanged.

We are excited to be a part of this important initiative that will put our residents on the information superhighway. As our world becomes increasingly technology-driven, we don't want to be left behind. The Connected community certification process will help us achieve a better business environment, more effective community and economic development, improved healthcare, enhanced education, and more efficient government.

Jake Anderson, City Manager and Community Broadband Champion, Van Meter, IA

Additional community technology action items included the integration of digital literacy programs at the local public library and activity center; sponsoring of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) activities; and identifying outreach programs that have helped enhance the community as a technology destination to attract new businesses, capital partners, and services.

This was a pattern to be followed by 23 other communities that brought community members together to begin the process of assessing the current broadband needs, evaluating them, and planning for the future.

Communities, with the goal of connecting every Iowan and every acre in mind, played pivotal roles in helping Iowa claim 24 of the country's 118 Technology Action Plans, and 18 of the 48 certified communities.

Governor Branstad and I are passionate about increasing access, adoption, and use of broadband technology in Iowa, so I am especially proud to present this award to my hometown. I commend Osceola on completing the extensive assessment and planning process in order to be recognized as a certified Connected community. I'm confident that the community will use this designation to increase the robust economic development efforts in Osceola.

Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds
State of Iowa

Van Meter: Van Meter is representative of the excitement being seen in the smaller, rural communities in Iowa. Van Meter was designated by the Iowa Economic Development Authority as one of only four 'Certified Industrial Sites' in the state, and city representatives were eager to partner that designation with the Connected Community Engagement Program.

Urbandale: Urbandale is a strong, urban community that rallied together to put together a very strong assessment covering all aspects of broadband. This community worked together to gather data and identify priority projects in a timely fashion. Their commitment toward developing a strong technology action plan so they can improve broadband for their community, now and in the future, is commendable. They have become a certified community.

Charles City: In 2012, Charles City started the assessment process, which received renewed focus from the mayor and the Community Broadband Champion, Tim Fox. Since that time, Charles City has progressed to complete the assessment and has become a certified community. Fox tells Connect Iowa that the entire process has been of great benefit to him and the Connected Community committee members. They are already identifying things that, up until this process, were never identified as community goals.
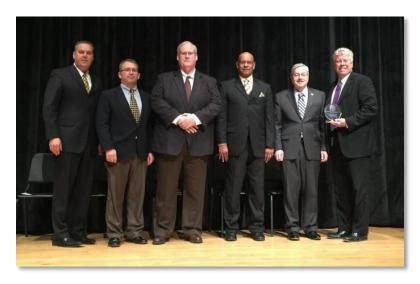
Osceola: Osceola is a shining example of how a community is already benefitting from the assessment process. Osceola began the assessment in 2012 but did not complete it. However, the community did begin work on some suggested projects. This local broadband activity resulted in significantly improved adoption and use scores, which enabled the community to complete and submitted its assessment and become a certified community. In September 2014, one of Osceola's local community broadband champions also related to Connect Iowa that the community didn't believe at first that the Connect Community Engagement Program could help increase its access to broadband service. However, by becoming involved with Connect Iowa, the community's broadband champions ended up working with a broadband provider to bring fiber connectivity to Osceola.

Fairfield: Fairfield is another example of a community that started the Connected process early, and then returned to the assessment process at a later date with renewed energy and focus. Fairfield completed the program in 2014, and is a very strong broadband community that does not want to rest on where it stands today; it has plans to build upon an already strong infrastructure that is able to provide 1 Gbps of service, by continuing to address community needs in access, adoption, and use. Fairfield's community broadband champions also relate that their local fiber broadband provider has announced plans to expand its service to the nearby city of Libertyville, Iowa, "helping the economic development of southeast Iowa."

I am proud of the hard work of the Ames Economic Development Commission and our County staff to guarantee that our community is connected. Recently Iowa and the country were reminded about the importance of broadband when President Obama came to Iowa and Governor Branstad gave his Condition of the State address. Story County has worked hard to put our community on the path to being connected to the world.

Leanne Lawrie Harter, Outreach and Special Projects Manager, Story County, Iowa

Story County: Story County began the Connected Community assessment process in 2012, completed it in 2014, and was named a certified Connected community on January 15, 2015. The community broadband champions directly reference "the importance of understanding our broadband needs today, as well as tomorrow, and the impact it has economically."

From Left: Dan Culhane, Ames Chamber and Economic Development Commission; Dave Daack, Connect Iowa; Paul Toot, Story County Board of Supervisors; Governor Terry Branstad; and Rick Sanders, Chairman of the Story County Board of Supervisors

Manning: Manning is the smallest community to become certified in Iowa with a population of less than 5,000. Manning is a progressive community that wants to expand its economy, strengthen its schools, broaden healthcare options, and provide strong governmental services through expanded access, adoption, and use of broadband.

Certified Events

In all, 18 communities in Iowa have become certified Connected communities, 2 of which were after the SBI program period ended. Each of them held a certification event well attended, in most cases, by a strong crowd consisting of local leaders and state and federal dignitaries. The Governor and/or Lt. Governor has attended over ten of these events, while U.S. Congressman Rod Blum attended two certification events, U.S. Senator Charles Grassley attended one, and U.S. Congressman Dave Loebsack sent a representative to one.

> *Iowa communities continue to lead the way to improve access, adoption, and use of broadband technology. Lt. Gov. Reynolds and I congratulate Manning for being recognized as a certified Connected community. Manning has taken important and essential steps to move Iowa forward, improving both economic development opportunities and quality of life for Iowans. I encourage all Iowa communities to complete the Connected community certification process presented by Connect Iowa and keep the momentum going.*
>
> **Governor Terry Branstad**
> **State of Iowa**

Moving Forward

Looking into Iowa's broadband future and achieving the Governor's goal of becoming the most broadband connected state in the Midwest, certified Connected Iowa communities have established technology action plans to help them achieve stronger, more vibrant broadband communities hoping to achieve, in the case of six communities, certification status; and for all twenty-four communities with action plans, continued improvement in the expansion of broadband through access, adoption, and use.

The technology action plans signify the beginning of the ongoing growth, expansion, and broadening of broadband in these communities. As of the writing of this report, eighteen communities have achieved Connected certification status, which is a great accomplishment; however, that comes with the responsibility to continue to build upon its broadband success and achievements.

> *We thought we'd benefit from finding out where we stood. The whole point of the certification process is to identify strengths and weaknesses. Frankly, even if you didn't get to the certification, you would still get a blueprint for moving forward to eliminate those weaknesses.*
>
> **Jim Erb, Mayor**
> **Charles City, Iowa**

For six communities, they too have the responsibility of building upon their current broadband situation, addressing weaknesses and ensuring the communities current, as well as future, broadband needs are met. They too hope to become a part of the eighteen certified communities and have the Governor visit their community and present them with the certification award. This might take months to achieve, but the key is having the plan and having the resources available to them to achieve broadband excellence.

Having a technology action plan does not signal the end of the broadband process; rather, it signals the beginning of the ongoing process of building stronger broadband networks, developing action items that create positive broadband growth results toward adoption practices in the community and provides the starting point for business, education, healthcare, and government, all the pillars of a community, to continually address how they are using broadband to expand business and increase education opportunities, healthcare options, and government efficiencies.

There were 107 broadband projects established through the development of the twenty-four technology action plans.

- 43 focus on Access
- 29 focus on Adoption
- 35 focus on Use

The **Access** focus area checks to see whether the broadband and technology foundation exists for a community. The criteria within Access focus area endeavors to identify gaps that could affect a local community broadband ecosystem. As noted in the National Broadband Plan, broadband Access "is a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and a better way of life."

BROADBAND ACCESS

Indianola Municipal Utilities adopted partnership agreements with the private sector to form its local IMU Partners Program, which allows access to the IMU Pointe of Presence facility that interconnects the fiber network. Data service providers and other business have expressed interest in using these facilities to form new, local tech businesses.

Broadband **Adoption** is important for consumers, institutions, and communities alike to take the next step in fully utilizing broadband appropriately. The Adoption component of the Connected Assessment seeks to ensure the ability of all individuals to access and use broadband.

BROADBAND ADOPTION

The West Des Moines Chamber has recently created the President's Council, a new group consisting of CEO's of West Des Moines' major employers. They will meet quarterly to discuss the vision and future of the city. We hope to utilize this group in gathering information and further defining exactly what is needed by when to ensure that West Des Moines is positioned perfectly to serve both businesses and their employees with their broadband needs.

Broadband **Use** is where the value of broadband can finally be realized. However, without access to broadband and adoption of broadband, meaningful Use of broadband wouldn't be possible. As defined by the National Broadband Plan (NBP), meaningful Use of broadband includes those areas of economic opportunity, education, government, and healthcare where values to individuals, organizations, and communities can be realized.

BROADBAND USE

The City of Urbandale has engaged a professional firm to assist in the re-launch of www.urbandale.org. The new website will be launched in summer 2015. It will incorporate features, information, and services that encourage residents and visitors to use the broadband services to which they have access in Urbandale. The insights gained through the Connect Iowa process and other focus groups are being incorporated into the design of the site.

The Connected Assessment has culminated in the outlining of projects designed to empower the community to accelerate broadband access, adoption, and use. Most of the 107 projects are in the initial stage of planning. There will be a need, in many cases, of continued support, guidance, and direction through leadership and execution for these plans to be successful and prosper.

Broadband and related technologies are essential for success in the twenty-first century connected global economy. Rural areas without adequate infrastructure, populations lacking digital literacy skills, and businesses unaware of the benefits of technology use will continue to be left behind without targeted programs to address these gaps. Connect Iowa's mapping and research uncovers the persisting access and adoption needs throughout the state, while its Connected Community Engagement Program ensures that communities have the knowledge, support, and resources to close these divides and leverage broadband for improved community and economic development.

Connect Iowa's success in the above initiatives is largely attributable to the strong partnership and vision of the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Governor Terry Branstad and his administration, the Iowa STEM Broadband Advisory Committee, and the Connect Iowa Advisory Board over the last five years. Connect Iowa has been privileged to work with its state and local stakeholders toward the mutual goal of improving broadband access, adoption, and use throughout Iowa.

> *We didn't realize the depth and breadth of that industry in our community. We didn't realize that we had 21 WiFi hotspots -- most private, but publicly available. We're a much better connected community than we thought going in. We would have never realized that without Connect Iowa.*
>
> **Tim Fox, Executive Director Charles City Area Development Corporation**

While this report has highlighted many successes under this collaboration, it is evident that additional work remains in order to ensure that all Iowa communities and residents are connected to twenty-first century technology and have the skills and support to use it to its fullest. Connect Iowa, with the enabling framework of its public-private partnership with the IEDA, is uniquely positioned to continue this work and solidify the state's standing in the interconnected global marketplace and economy.

Please see Appendix 8 for more information on the Connected Community Program in Iowa.