



BROADBAND: INCREASING AVAILABILITY, ACCESS, & UTILIZATION

Broadband is increasingly recognized for the important role it plays in socio-economic growth and development. Broadband affects business operations, market access, labor markets, innovation, education, home sales, public services, and neighborhood amenities. Main Street businesses, modern agricultural practices, home-based e-commerce businesses, and K-12 students with homework assignments all depend on reliable, high-speed internet connections. Strong internet connections allow for online learning in higher education. Retirees may wish to stay in their homes, if internet service is available.

Access to broadband has become a core economic development tool and a reflection on the quality of life.

In 2015, the Broadband Opportunity Council declared, "Broadband has steadily shifted from an optional amenity to a core utility for households, businesses and community institutions." This places broadband in the same category as water, sewer, and electricity as an essential service. The Wisconsin Legislature approved \$1.5 million in additional funding for broadband expansion throughout Wisconsin. More is available through the Universal Service Fund. The federal government has also made significant funding available through the Connect America program. Such funding can provide the critical push to align the interests of private providers, local governments, and citizens, so that expansion plans can be realized.

Despite this recognized importance, broadband availability, access, and utilization continues to lag in many areas of Wisconsin, particularly small towns and rural areas. As reported by the Wall Street Journal, towns lacking adequate broadband services are finding themselves falling behind economically. St. Croix EDC has taken up this challenge to improve the situation of broadband access and availability in St. Croix County.

WORKING WITH ST. CROIX EDC

St. Croix EDC's Broadband Committee is focusing efforts on speeding up broadband expansion in the county. These actions are taking place within a well-established framework for change. The EDC is funding a survey to gather data on broadband availability, use, and demand in order to raise awareness among residents and local government leaders; to help inform providers of potential opportunities; and to provide critical information for pursuing available funding opportunities such as the Wisconsin's Broadband Expansion Grants. The EDC Broadband Committee continually looks for new partners to help promote and forward activities for the expansion of broadband.



STEPS BEING PURSUED

Creating a sense of urgency:

Members of the EDC Broadband Committee will also work with the county government to explore possible legislative actions that make it more efficient and attractive to expand broadband services.

Building a guiding coalition: The committee is in a continuous process of identifying willing and valuable partners to help promote and forward activities for the expansion of broadband. Partners may come from local government, citizens, the private sector, and NGOs.

Developing and communicating a strategic vision: The state mandated comprehensive planning process is another promising area to integrate the needs of broadband expansion into local development agendas. This is especially useful given the wide ranging impacts of broadband. It is highly anticipated that local communities will increasingly seek to address their broadband needs as part of their plans to determine their economic futures.

Enabling action and removing barriers: This action may include the development of public-private partnerships, which can include partnerships for funding a co-application, tower agreements, or shared resource agreements. This action may also be aimed at changes in or development of local ordinances, permits or codes. Options can include public right-of-way policies, dig-once ordinances, or tower ordinances.

Generating short-term wins: Short-term wins can provide crucial early stage momentum toward larger objectives. Actions here can include public awareness raising and educational efforts to increase knowledge of the uses and safe use of internet based services; education about telecommuting (e.g. work from home) and tele-health options, and general education about opportunities and options for expanding broadband.

Learning from experience and instituting change: Many communities around Wisconsin and the US have successfully addressed the challenges facing broadband expansion. Local efforts are continual to learn about and implement these innovative approaches which include establishing Community Area Networks; locally constructed broadband infrastructure, establishing cooperatives, and establishing public-private partnerships.

SCEDC MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

ASSOCIATE (\$100-\$249)

- The Chronicle (quarterly)
- St. Croix Business Facts (monthly)
- Business of the Year Banquet (one ticket)
- Special meetings and events
- Link on SCEDC website
- Advertising opportunities

BRONZE (\$250-\$999)

In addition to the benefits listed for the Associate level:

- Business Briefing Reception (two tickets)
- SCEDC Legislative Networking Event (one ticket)

SILVER (\$1,000-\$2,499)

In addition to the benefits listed for the Bronze level:

- Upgraded link on SCEDC's website
- Business of the Year Banquet (two tickets)
- Annual meeting with SCEDC Executive Director

GOLD (\$2,500-\$4,999)

In addition to the benefits listed for the Silver level:

- Banner ad on SCEDC's website
- Business of the Year Banquet (four tickets)
- Advertising insert in The Chronicle

PLATINUM LEVEL (\$5,000+)

In addition to the benefits listed for the Gold level:

- Business of the Year Banquet Reserved Table (eight tickets)
- Display ad in The Chronicle



Through its professional staff and diverse board of directors, St. Croix Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) encourages economic growth and capital investment to enhance the tax base, create jobs and ensure businesses expansion and retention in St. Croix County. More than 100 public and private members provide financial support or in-kind services to this member driven organization.

If you are a local, regional, national or international business looking to begin, relocate or expand, connect with us and find out all the possibilities that St. Croix County has to offer.

RESPONSIVE. THOUGHTFUL. RESPECTED.

- Monitors business markets and provides information to members
- Maintains critical data on employment, financing and business activities
- Interfaces with state and federal elected officials on legislative issues
- Governed by a 19-member board with representatives from public and private organizations

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Contact us at 715.381.4383
for an informational meeting

St. Croix Economic Development Corp.

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www.stcroixedc.com