

# Broadband for All

## Comprehensive Community Development I

Suzane Anarde, Rural LISC, Moderator

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RECLAIMING  
APPALACHIA

NeighborWorks<sup>®</sup>  
AMERICA

fahe  
Strength in Numbers

#InvestInRural



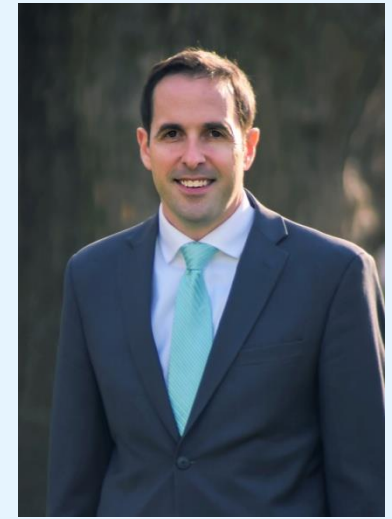
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**WORKSHOP NOTES - RECLAIMING APPALACHIA RURAL CONFERENCE**

<b>Title of Workshop: Broadband for All</b>	<b>Note Taker: Angela Swain Rohs</b>
<b>Date: September 10, 2019</b>	<b>Note Taker email: arohs@nw.org</b>
<b>Presenters:</b> Whitney Kimball Coe, Center for Rural Strategies; Nathan Ohle, Rural Community Assistance Partnership; Arthur Scott, National Association of Counties; Suzanne Anarde, Rural LISC, Moderator	<b>Approx # of Attendees: 25</b>

**Workshop Description:**

We know our rural communities can compete in global markets if they have access to high speed internet. Come and hear effective strategies and proposed solutions to meet the challenges associated with securing this infrastructure investment.

**Key Discussion Points**

- I. Why should we be thinking about broadband in a rural context? How can we have impact and ensure access for all in rural areas? Can we do this? What will the cost be?
  - a. Large swaths of rural areas have extremely low access to high speed internet.
  - b. Here’s just one example of why this matters – the 202 Census has a goal of collecting a lot of data electronically. Given the lack of access in rural and persistent poverty areas to reliable broadband, it’s very possibly that there will be serious undercounting in rural and persistent poverty areas, which means less funding and less representation for those areas.
  
- II. Broadband coverage maps are used by numerous agencies and Congress to determine who has access to broadband/high speed internet. BUT – these maps are very likely flawed.
  - a. How are the maps inaccurate? The maps rely on data reported by the internet providers themselves, and there is no way to double check these numbers.
    - i. The availability and speed is reported two times a year by ISP providers, but there is no way to verify the accuracy of the data.
    - ii. Evidence suggests that an entire zip code is marked as “served” if just one home in the census block has coverage.
  - b. Why does that matter? It matters because if the FCC’s broadband map shows that rural and persistent poverty areas have access to broadband, there won’t be additional funding from Congress to grow access. So, the inaccuracy of the maps means needed funding to ensure all have access to broadband won’t go to where it’s needed most.
    - i. There are currently FIVE bills in Congress that seek to regulate collection of broadband coverage data collection. The bills are diverse, but appear focused on addressing flawed data collection/FCC.
  - c. If we can address the inaccuracy, what does that mean? If the maps can be corrected so that the reality of what access is in rural and persistent poverty areas is reflected, Congress can appropriately allocate additional funding to increase access. If access is improved, it means a great deal for Americans living in these areas (detailed below).
  
- III. TestIT App
  - a. This is an app that measures your upload and download speeds.
  - b. You download the app, run the test, and the app collects your specific coordinates and

upload/download speed. If you do not have access to wireless or other internet access, the app saves your information and uploads to their system when you are next connected.

- c. No personal information is collected.
  - d. 90,000 tests so far, mostly in rural areas.
  - e. They believe the data used will allow for more concrete and accurate representation of coverage in areas of need.
  - f. [www.lisc.org/TestIt](http://www.lisc.org/TestIt)
  - g. Designed by Measurement Lab, in partnership with NACO, Rural LISC, RCAP, NADO.
- IV. There are opportunities to work on larger partnerships around broadband coverage, and can not only address broadband access, but also other community issues. Coalitions of varied groups can accomplish much more.
- V. Rural Broadband Policy Group – 4 Principles
- a. Communication is a human right.
  - b. Rural America is diverse.
  - c. Local Ownership
  - d. Neutrality/Net Neutrality
- VI. Rural Youth Assembly, young adults ages 16-24, broadband is a key part of their mission.
- VII. What can we do to encourage growing broadband access?
- a. There are five bills in Congress – let your elected officials know this is a great need.
  - b. Use the TestIT app – the data will help tell the story.
  - c. Direct, Local Action – hold listening sessions with residents to get to know what they need around internet access, and to educate on why broadband access is so important. Talk to your local elected officials – very often they are the ones with access to your state officials who can make a difference.
- VIII. How can we make broadband accessible and affordable?
- a. Competition will mean lower cost, higher quality of service.
  - b. Innovation is ongoing in terms of how traditionally underserved areas can be provided better access.
  - c. States, such as Virginia and Tennessee are doing their own tests, to see what the actual need is, which will allow for future action.

#### **Themes/Overall Impressions**

It is clear that there remains much work to be done to ensure everyone has access to technology, a bridge to development and growth in areas persistently underserved. It's also clear that there is a very real and continued threat of underrepresentation in some areas, like rural communities, which will have a continued tangible impact on how those areas are represented and funded.

*“I contain multitudes.” –Walt Whitman*

**RURAL ASSEMBLY**  
**BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE NATION**

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Whitney Kimball Coe  
Director of National Programs  
Center for Rural Strategies



# THE RURAL ASSEMBLY: Building an Inclusive Nation



# Rural Youth Assembly Vision Statement

## Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2010

“We demand of ourselves a proactive and invested community that has quality healthcare, adequate housing, and enlightened education in a safe and sustainable environment. Where no person goes thirsty, hungry, or homeless, and every person is accepted no matter who your mamma is. All these things done with love tell the story of our future in rural communities.”



## Rural Broadband Policy Group

The Rural Broadband Policy Group is a national coalition of rural broadband advocates. The RBPG has two goals:

1. To articulate broadband policies that create opportunities for rural communities to participate fully in the nation's democracy, economy, culture, and society, and
2. To spark and kindle national collaboration among rural advocates for fast, affordable, and reliable Internet.



Rural Broadband  
Principles  
*Any discussion of  
broadband and  
Internet policy for  
rural communities  
should begin  
here:*

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## **Communication is a human right.**

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The United Nations recently declared Internet Access a Human Right. Lack of broadband denies rural areas the human right to communicate. Without broadband, rural communities are further isolated from economic and civic participation. Broadband is no longer a luxury but a vital service necessary to participate fully in our nation's ~~democracy, economy, culture, and society.~~

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## **Rural America is diverse.**

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Rural America is diverse in terrains, cultures, foods, peoples, and knowledge. There is no one-size-fits-all broadband solution for connecting rural communities. Therefore, the diversity of rural America must be at the forefront of national broadband policies.

Policies should support diverse technologies, encourage locally produced content, use adequate data collection methods, and respect the unique characteristics of each rural community.

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## **Local ownership and investment in community is the priority.**

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Local ownership of broadband infrastructure and service can address access, affordability, deployment, lack of competition, limited provider choice, open access, digital literacy, and data collection – problems ignored by big telecommunications corporations. Policies that prioritize local ownership invest in the success of community. When rural communities own local communications infrastructure, they boost the economy, create jobs, and are held accountable to make broadband accessible to every resident.

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## **Network neutrality and open access are vital.**

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Rural areas generally have less access to all forms of media, not just broadband. Therefore, open and unfiltered access to all information online is vitally important for rural communities. Democratic action, innovation, and basic liberty demand no less.

Tired of waiting  
for your posts to upload?

# TEST YOUR BROADBAND SPEED TODAY

*Help us to identify areas with little to no internet connectivity and contribute to the movement to increase rural broadband coverage across the nation!*

## Get Started!

Locate the free app  
by searching "TestIT"



[www.lisc.org/TestIT](http://www.lisc.org/TestIT)

*No personal information is collected through the app.*

