

## **Expand Broadband Deployment**

### **Background:**

Broadband to the last mile has been an Indiana Farm Bureau priority for several years. The General Assembly has made several changes to Indiana law, which has positioned Indiana for widespread broadband deployment in rural areas and small towns.

A 2018 study by Alison Grant, Wally Tyner and Larry DeBoer of Purdue University, *Estimation of the Net Benefits of Indiana Statewide Adoption of Rural Broadband*<sup>[1]</sup>, show significant overall return on the investment in broadband but insufficient revenue for the service provider. This is because of the high cost of upfront infrastructure investment and the limited return for the service provider, even though societal benefits are quite high. The study was commissioned by the Indiana Electric Cooperatives, Tipmont REMC and CoBank. It included conservative calculations of benefits through telemedicine, education, business investment and economic development, consumer savings, and farm income changes.

Gov. Eric Holcomb recently announced a commitment of \$100 million for broadband deployment. That level of financial commitment, used in a grant program for unserved and underserved areas, will make a big difference in whether broadband will be available to all residents of Indiana. The focus of Indiana Farm Bureau this legislative session is to ensure that the \$100 million is quickly and fully available to any provider who has the capability to provide adequate service in areas where broadband is needed.

### **Talking Points:**

- Broadband has been proven to be a necessity for increased economic development and to allow those in agriculture and in small businesses in rural areas to keep up with current technology.
- Explain your personal need for broadband access and the technology requirements on your farm and in your home.
- The study by Purdue University shows a 4:1 societal return on the investment of funds into broadband in rural communities and small towns around the state.
- The same study shows that if an REMC would invest in fiber in its territory, it will not receive a positive return on investment (approximately \$.50 on every dollar invested), even if a majority of homes and businesses buy the service.
- Share your willingness to help get broadband expansion in your community if the state will help service that upfront investment in the infrastructure.

### **Key Message/Ask:**

- Ask the legislator to support the investment of state dollars in rural and small-town Indiana.
  - Note that the \$100 million will be a significant help but additional investment in infrastructure may be needed in the future.
- Urge them not to allow undue restrictions to be put in place that limits the successful expansion of broadband.

[\[1\] Research & Policy Insights Indiana Broadband Study](#)

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