

## Indiana Broadband Strategic Partners

### Indiana Speed Test

May 2021

#### Background

Indiana Farm Bureau has advocated for the expansion of rural broadband for many years. In 2019, the State of Indiana appropriated \$100 million for Next Level Connections broadband implementation grants. So far \$79 million dollars have been awarded to projects in *unserved* areas. As the pandemic forced everyone online for remote work, virtual learning, ecommerce and telehealth, it became clear that broadband service in most of Indiana left citizens *underserved*. In the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly appropriated \$250 million from federal ARPA funds to be awarded via the Next Level Connections grant program. They also raised the minimum speed for grants recognizing that the broader issue is *underserved* households.

The COVID pandemic created the perfect storm for legislative advocacy aimed at expanding broadband to underserved areas and raising the minimum speeds for grant funded projects to solve the issue of *underserved*. Challenges during the recent quarantine demonstrated a lack of access to affordable, high speed broadband in all corners of Indiana, but especially rural Indiana.

As Next Level Connections Grants were reviewed during 2019 and 2020, it became obvious that communities applying for state or federal grants needed better data to combat the challenges from existing Internet Service Providers (ISPs) as to where they provide service. ISPs challenge grant applications to protect their current and potential service areas, regardless of the quality of the broadband they provide.

#### Finding Solutions

To improve the challenge process used to review grant applications, a speed test was needed that empowered citizens to demonstrate their lack of adequate broadband. Additionally, the speed test data needed to be captured so it could be analyzed versus taking speed tests like Google, ATT, Xfinity, Verizon and the like that are used by those businesses to monitor the capacity of their networks.

Katrina Hall of Indiana Farm Bureau sorted through available broadband speed testing and found GEO Partners LLC who gathers broadband speed tests that demonstrate location and quality of broadband service in real time. GEO Partners LLC is based in Minnesota and has been key to their state's Border to Border Broadband Initiative.

GeoPartners LLC is a software company focused on enabling cost effective planning and deployment of broadband using crowd-sourced testing data.

GeoPartners LLC provides a web-based geospatial software that locates broadband tests on a map and provides analytical tools to use that data. See their website here: <https://geopartnersllc.com/>

GeoPartners LLC software features:

- Maps created by citizens who run speed tests from their home computers and mobile devices.
- Speed test results are date/time stamped and stored.
- Maps that provide data for broadband projects to meet needs and prevent overbuilding.
- Maps that use tests over time provide data for accountability and allows decision makers to analyze if deployments/grant programs are meeting expectations including services of existing providers.

- Mapping data that permits grant administrators to interactively determine the impacts of their programs and intended targets in real-time, without relying on outdated historical maps.
- Mapping data over time that shows how wisely and effectively government officials are spending taxpayer dollars.

### Indiana Speed Test

To support the implementation and distribution of the **Indiana Speed Test, the Indiana Broadband Strategic Partnership** was created to build influence and clout behind efforts to implement high speed broadband across Indiana. Sponsoring organizations purchased the software platform that provides mapping of **Indiana Speed Test** data covers all of Indiana. The testing application and access to the data gathered will be available free of charge to organizations promoting the **Indiana Speed Test** and groups planning broadband projects across Indiana.

The **Indiana Speed Test** will appear on websites of sponsoring and collaborating partners to spread out the website requirements, even though all data will be accumulated on the servers of GeoPartners LLC.

Katrina Hall is the **Project Lead** for the **Indiana Broadband Strategic Partnership and the Indiana Speed Test**. Her contact information is [khall@infb.org](mailto:khall@infb.org) cell number is 317-727-3654.

### Sponsoring Organizations

- Indiana Farm Bureau
- Cook Medical Group
- Duke Energy
- Indiana Realtors
- Radius Indiana
- ROI – Regional Opportunity Initiative

### Collaborating Partners - committed

- Lt Governor Suzanne Crouch
- Indiana Broadband and Office of Community and Rural Affairs
- Purdue Center for Regional Development
- Association of Indiana Counties
- Indiana Hospital Association / Indiana Rural Health Association
- Indiana Association of Regional Councils – 16 groups representing all but 9 counties
- Accelerating Indiana’s Municipalities

### Collaborating Partners - targets

- Indiana Association of Small and Rural Schools – ~ 70 school corporations
- Indiana School Boards Association – 292 school corporations
- REMCs – Indiana Electric Cooperatives
- AARP
- State Universities – Purdue, IU, ISU, BSU, USI, Ivy Tech
- Recognized personalities from news
- Hoosier Press
- Indiana Library Federation