

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2009, Connect Michigan, in partnership with the Michigan Public Service Commission, has served as the state's designated entity for broadband mapping, research, technical assistance, and local technology planning. The following report summarizes advances made in broadband access, adoption, and use over the past five years, as well as outstanding challenges and opportunities for continued growth to ensure that all Michigan communities, residents, institutions, and businesses are connected to twenty-first century technology, and equipped with the skills and support to utilize it to its fullest.

According to Connect Michigan's broadband maps, the state has experienced strong growth in broadband infrastructure and deployment, as well as increased competition among the higher broadband speed tiers over the last five years. Despite progress, significant connectivity gaps persist in the state, particularly in rural regions and the Upper Peninsula.

While expanding broadband access to these areas is important, without corresponding broadband adoption among Michigan's consumers and businesses, further investment and build-out could be deterred. To provide information on the people, businesses, and communities that are taking advantage – and more importantly, not yet taking advantage – of the expansive opportunities provided through broadband, Connect Michigan conducts annual statewide residential and business broadband surveys. In 2014, these surveys revealed that 75% of Michiganders have adopted broadband at home, and 80% of businesses in the state utilize broadband. Yet, with 1.9 million adults and 43,000 businesses statewide still without broadband, there remains much to do.

As Michigan's broadband access and adoption rates have increased over the last five years, so too have the innovative ways in which consumers and businesses are utilizing technology. To encourage such use, Connect Michigan partnered in launching a Small Business Technology Taskforce project in four pilot communities throughout the state, and hosts the annual Connect Michigan Broadband Conference. With 500 participants at the inaugural event in 2013, and more than 700 in 2014, the Connect Michigan Broadband Conference has become the premier technology summit in the state, convening hundreds of cross-sector stakeholders and providing a platform for ongoing technology innovation and expansion.

Within individual communities, Connect Michigan facilitates broadband and technology outreach, education, and dissemination through its Connected Community Engagement Program ("Connected"). The Connected program coalesces and trains regional leaders and forms community broadband planning teams to assess the local technology landscape. Each community is then provided a step-by-step action plan to meet their local technology needs. Since 2009, 24 Michigan communities have successfully completed local technology assessments and received Technology Action Plans through this program, and an additional 21 communities are currently working to complete their plans. Connected teams are working to address a wide variety of technology-related issues across community sectors. From addressing rural infrastructure gaps, improving the online presence and use of technology among businesses, or expanding telehealth opportunities at rural institutions, to expanding e-government services, hosting local technology summits, or developing, implementing, and support one-to-one device programs and connectivity for schools, the Connected program offers a direct intervention for accelerating the access, adoption, and use of technology across Michigan.