University of Missouri System **Broadband Initiative**

Promoting Broadband in Missouri Communities

Why Broadband?

Cutting-edge technologies — such as internet-based business, precision agriculture, tele-healthcare, eLearning, smart infrastructure and smart government, and many more — are key to improving Missourians' lives and opportunities.

These 21st century technologies all require access to reliable high-speed internet and a population trained to use them effectively. Yet, many areas of Missouri currently lack the broadband infrastructure necessary to use these new applications. Almost 20% of Missourians — more than 1.2 million citizens — do not have access to high-speed internet at this time.

Through the Broadband Initiative, the MU System partners with state and local governments, businesses and nonprofit stakeholders, sharing knowledge, resources and tools as we work together to build the digital superhighway and increase broadband access across Missouri[1].

What is the UM System Broadband Initiative?

The UM System will work to find solutions and bring broadband–based applications to local communities by:

1. Advising communities related to broadband planning and needs assessment

2. Introducing communities to opportunities such as digital learning and education, broadband-based healthcare, workforce development and e-business development

3. Introducing community stakeholders to legal and financial structures to help fund broadband deployment

4. Promoting the use of broadband-based technologies and applications to address the grand challenges of health, economy and education

5. Evaluating and sharing results, to develop "best practices" for other communities

Role for faculty and staff in the initiative

You may have questions about what role to play in the UM System Broadband Initiative's* focus on community broadband efforts. This guide identifies roles for UM System faculty and staff, including MU Extension, in assisting local communities (i.e., neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties, etc.) as they explore solutions to broadband challenges. Considerations include community engagement around the topic of broadband, technology assessment, financing and legal structures and promoting adoption.

Your role will depend on the need of the community and your area of expertise. One size doesn't fit all and that's OK! You can choose a supportive role (resource sharer, connector or collaborator) and/or a leadership role. More information about these roles is outlined below.

RESOURCE SHARER

WHAT TO DO: Be familiar with the UM System Broadband Initiative and related information and resources and share with community stakeholders working on broadband issues. For more information and resources, go to https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/engagement-outreach/impact.

HOW TO SHARE RESOURCES*: Identify community groups working on broadband issues and respond to their needs (access, affordability, utilization, etc.) by sharing UM System Broadband Initiative resources.

Additionally, be aware of what lives on the mobroadband.org website that can be easily shared and pointed to for reference.

Example: A coalition on internet affordability and adoption has formed in your community to address inequity. Contact the coalition leader and share UM System Broadband Initiative resources.

CONNECTOR

WHAT TO DO: Connect community stakeholders with UM System faculty and staff who can help solve local broadband challenges.

HOW TO CONNECT: Understand the broadband needs/challenges in the community and then contact Alison Copeland, UM System Broadband Initiative leader, at copelanda@umsystem.edu. Alison can help you identify UM System faculty and staff to help find information and solutions.

Example: A community wants to increase broadband availability because 60% of the population has no access to internet in the home, negatively impacting online learning for children and entrepreneurial opportunities. The group needs assistance understanding broadband funding and finance options. The UM System has faculty and staff members with expertise in broadband-related finance, business and legal matters.

COLLABORATOR

WHAT TO DO: Become an active participant in a community group working to solve broadband challenges.

HOW TO COLLABORATE: Become knowledgeable about broadband and related challenges in the community. Attend community group meetings, sharing UM System Broadband Initiative resources and expertise and advising the community. Contact Alison Copeland, UM System Broadband Initiative leader, at copelanda@umsystem.edu for support and guidance.

Example: A rural health care entity is exploring enhanced telehealth services to increase access to care and reduce patient travel time and cost. The group would benefit from having a faculty or staff member from any of the four UM System universities or MU Extension serving as a member to actively connect UM System assets with community needs.

LEADER

WHAT TO DO: With input from community members, identify broadband needs and challenges and form a working group. Community change takes people power. Try to make your working group diverse and representative of your community. Involve youth, professionals and retired persons. Set a monthly meeting time and location to hold yourselves accountable. Grow this group as more people become interested.

HOW TO LEAD:

a. Begin with an assessment. You can use the assessment tools on the All Things Missouri platform to identify issues in your community. You can decide to focus on issues within a specific category, like internet access for K-12 learning, or look more broadly across issues. You can use the Broadband Planning Guide on the Missouri Broadband Resource Rail to get a better understanding of your specific county/counties. More UM System Broadband Resources are available at https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/engagement-outreach/impact.

b. Take an inventory. Talk to people in your community about what's working well and what needs improvement. Take an inventory of organizations, clubs and anchor institutions like schools and churches. Schedule a time to meet with each of these groups and hear their concerns and ideas.

c. Prioritize and focus based on what you learn. Select one to three issues that were identified through the assessment process and your conversations with the community. Start with your end goal in mind and build a path of strategies that will get you there. Make sure your goals are SMART — specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

GOAL EXAMPLES:

Education: Ensure that all public schools in a school district have access to internet speeds of at least 25 Mbps by 2022.

Health: Increase the number of local mental health providers who also provide telehealth services by 50% in two years.

Economy: Provide free public WIFI in the downtown area by July 2021.

d. Identify resources, experts and contacts. Share UM System Broadband Initiative resources and expertise. Contact Alison Copeland, UM System Broadband Initiative manager, for support and guidance.

*UM System Broadband Resources

- [Missouri Broadband Resource Rail](#)

  - Resource Navigator is a way to organize community resources and see who else is involved.

  - The library is full of information to get you up to speed or educate others.

  - Report and Mapping tools help you assess your location.

- [Bringing Broadband to a Missouri Community plan](#)

- UM System Broadband Initiative description https://mobroadband.org/about/

- Alison Copeland, UM System Broadband Initiative leader — copelanda@umsystem.edu

Other University Resources

- MU Extension community development specialists, based in counties across Missouri

- [All Things Missouri District Explorer tools](#) provide other key contacts at state and local levels.

[1] BroadbandUSA provides a [glossary of broadband terms](#). From digital equity to "fiber to the home" (FTTH) and "rights of way" (ROW) to telemedicine, this site provides definitions of terms associated with broadband and broadband-based applications.