

Indiana County: Broadband Expansion

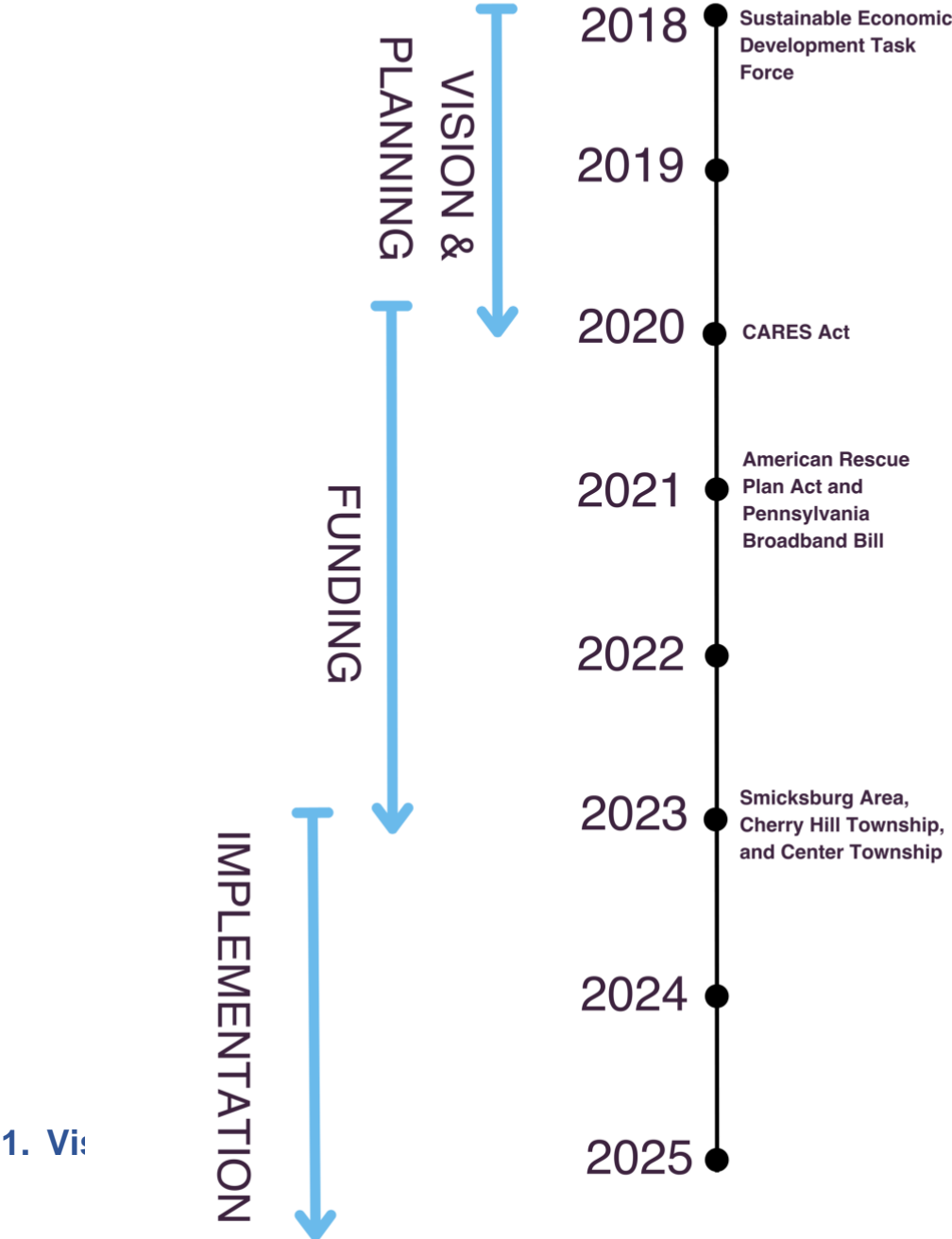
“High-speed internet will help families stay connected, enhance students’ opportunities to learn, enable businesses to remain competitive, and provide access to healthcare including telemedicine.”



The steps for broadband expansion:

- 1. Vision and Planning
- 2. Funding
- 3. Implementation

Indiana County Broadband Expansion



1. Vi:

Since 2018, Commissioner Sherene Hess has been working to provide high-speed internet access to all Indiana County residents. She led this effort in her role of Steering Committee Chair of the Indiana County Sustainable Economic Development Task Force.

A summary of the [recommendation](#) presented to Indiana County Commissioners Rod Ruddock and Mike Baker by the Indiana County Sustainable Economic Development Task Force is noted below:

To support ongoing efforts to improve broadband across Indiana County to allow Indiana County to be economically competitive and to allow for quality of life for our citizens.

In 2021, our county's first responders and public safety community began using 'FirstNet' the nationwide, high-speed broadband communications platform. Indiana County Emergency Management has contributed to the planning of increasing broadband communications across the county.

More recently, federal and state legislation has provided the resources to begin a project of this magnitude. In addition to a vision for the future, adequate funding, and a plan for implementation with the collaboration of local and state-level elected officials is necessary to move the project forward.

“Over the past few years, I have been working with community members to enhance broadband internet access to the various areas of our rural county. Although the timeline of this project is influenced by infrastructure challenges involving equipment, supplies and labor, I am confident that thoughtful and strategic efforts of our Indiana County officials to address these challenges will allow us to see progress in 2024 and 2025.”

2. Funding

- CARES Act
 - 2020
 - Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act
 - Direct economic assistance for American workers, families, small businesses, and industries
- American Rescue Plan Act
 - 2021
 - Investments in broadband infrastructure
- Pennsylvania Broadband Bill
 - 2021
 - Provide broadband access to unserved and underserved communities
- Examples of additional funding sources – Federal, State, and local
 - 2021-2023
 - Appalachian Regional Commission with Indiana County matching funds
 - Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development through National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA)
 - Community Development Block Grant: COVID19 (CDBG-CV funds)
 - Appalachian Regional Commission Partnership for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (ARC POWER initiative)
 - Pennsylvania's Keystone Communities Program
 - Indiana County – matching funds

3. Implementation

“I am hopeful that we as leaders have been effective in our collective advocacy efforts these past 5 to 10 years. These investments will impact our workforce,

local economies, educational opportunities, working families, and small businesses.”

Phase 1:

- January 2023
- Northwest Corner: Smicksburg Area, Cherryhill Township, Center Township
- Contractor – Salsgiver Inc.

Phase 2:

- April 2023
- Contractor: REA Energy Cooperative Inc./The Stix Broadband LLC (RTA/ITX)

Looking forward: Phases of Broadband Expansion Plans

The historic investment in broadband infrastructure expansion is impacting communities across our country.

Therefore, locally, statewide, and nationally there are broadband infrastructure challenges involving equipment, supplies and labor. This impacts the timeline of broadband projects across our country.

In closing, I have used the following sources to help us – the residents of Indiana County – increase our understanding of the progress of broadband expansion projects in Indiana County.

- [Indiana County Courthouse Website](#)
- [38 municipalities of Indiana County](#)
- [ARC Target Area map](#)
- [CDBG Broadband Project map](#)
- [Rural Digital Opportunity Fund \(RDOF\) map](#)