

TRORC Board Meeting – Zoom Meeting
 December 9, 2020 – Board Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Name	Town	2/26/20	3/25/20	4/22/20	5/27/20	6/24/20	9/23/20	10/28/20	12/9/20
Jerry Fredrickson	Barnard	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Steve Cota	Barnard (Alt)								X
Paul Vallee	Bethel			X		X	X	X	X
Nancy Jones	Bradford	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Marcey Carver	Bradford (Alt)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Vacant	Braintree								
Lynne Bertram	Bridgewater								
Gwynn Zakov	Brookfield	X		X	X			X	X
Jon Binhammer	Brookfield (Alt.)								
Carl Pepperman	Chelsea			X		X		X	X
Tim O'Dell	Corinth	X	X	X		X		X	X
Peter Berger	Fairlee	X	X	X		X			X
Mark Belisle	Granville	X	X						X
Monica Collins	Hancock		X			X		X	
Lori Hirshfield	Hartford		X	X	X	X	X		X
Bruce Riddle	Hartford (Alt)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Charles Jeffries	Hartland	X	X	X	X		X	X	
David Ormiston	Hartland					X			
Frank Tegethoff	Newbury	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Larry Scott	Newbury (Alt.)								
Rod Francis	Norwich		X	X	X		X		X
Jeff Lubell	Norwich	X		X		X	X	X	
Sarah Gallagher	Pittsfield		X	X		X	X	X	X
Anne Brown	Plymouth	X	X				X		
Jim Allen	Plymouth (Alt.)								
Bill Emmons	Pomfret	X	X	X			X	X	X
Phil Dechert	Pomfret (Alt)	X			X	X	X	X	
Ramsey Papp	Randolph	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gary Dir	Randolph (Alt)		X	X	X		X	X	X
Anni Mackay	Rochester	X	X	X				X	X
Doon Hinderyckx	Rochester (Alt)	X		X					X
David Brandau	Royalton			X	X	X	X	X	X
Bushrod Powers	Royalton (Alt)		X			X	X	X	X

Ira Clark	Sharon						X	X	X
Deborah Jones	Sharon (Alt.)								
Bill Edgerton	Stockbridge								
John Echeverria	Strafford		X	X	X		X	X	X
Jesse Anderson	Thetford		X		X		X	X	
Jim Masland	Thetford (Alt)								
Jim Clark	Topsham						X		
Michael Sacca	Tunbridge		X						X
Kevin Rose	Tunbridge (Alt)	X	X	X	X		X		X
Bill Baylis	Vershire								
Nancy Malmquist	W. Fairlee	X	X	X		X		X	X
Don Bourdon	Woodstock			X					
Brad Prescott	Woodstock (Alt)								X
Meghan Butts	At-Large			X	X		X	X	X
Jennifer Colby	At-Large	X	X			X			
Ken Alton	At-Large		X	X				X	X
Vacant - Conservation	At-Large								
Beth Long	At-Large	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meg Emmons	At-Large		X			X			X

Staff: Peter Gregory, Pete Fellows, Lori Kay, Victoria Littlefield, Geoff Martin

Guests: Matt Dunne, Center for Rural Innovation (CORI)

1. Call to Order, Approval of the Agenda, Roll Call, and Public Comments:

The virtual meeting opened at 6:30 p.m. A quorum after roll call was declared. No changes to the agenda were made. There were no comments from the public.

2. Public Hearing – Town Plan Approval for Bethel

Executive Director Gregory shared that Sarah Wraight of TRORC helped Bethel’s Planning Commission to update the Town Plan. Many changes were incorporated including sections on flood resilience, priority forest and statutory forest blocks. Commissioner Vallee thanked the TRORC staff for their help.

3. Public Hearing – Determination of Energy Compliance for Bethel; Determination of Energy Compliance for Thetford

TRORC Energy Coordinator Geoff Martin provided an overview of Bethel’s new chapter on Energy Compliance in their Town Plan. He offered a suggestion for the next version of their chapter – to address the issue of fossil fuels.

Martin reported on the review of Thetford's Energy Compliance section of their Town Plan. He noted that it met all the standards and in fact their goal for reducing greenhouse gases by 2020 exceeds the State of Vermont's goals.

4. Approval of Town Plan for Bethel

On a motion made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Tegethoff, the Town Plan for Bethel was unanimously approved.

5. Approval of Determination of Energy Compliance for Bethel; Determination of Energy Compliance for Thetford

On a motion made by Commissioner Emmons and seconded by Commissioner Powers, the towns of Bethel and Thetford were unanimously approved to receive Determinations of Energy Compliance.

6. Approval of Minutes from October 28, 2020 Meeting

On a motion made by Commissioner Powers and seconded by Commissioner Emmons, the October Meeting Minutes were accepted unanimously. Gregory thanked the Board for their approval of the TRORC Investment Policy and noted that he is now working with Mascoma Bank's financial services department to put the Investment Policy into action.

On a motion made by Commissioner Powers and seconded by Commissioner Emmons, the October Meeting Minutes were accepted unanimously.

7. Acceptance of the Unaudited October and November 2020 TRORC Financial Reports

On a motion made by Commissioner Emmons, and seconded by Commissioner Belisle, the unaudited October and November Financial Reports were approved unanimously.

Gregory commented on the financials, stating that activity on the Sole Proprietor grants has increased – more grants are now being paid out to grant recipients. Round two of this grants program will start after January 1. He also noted that salary expenses were higher during the first part of the calendar year due to bringing in some extra help during the summer for transportation-related projects.

Commissioner O'Dell raised the idea of amending the balance sheet report to include a comparison against last year's numbers while acknowledging that he was unsure if it would provide helpful information. Gregory offered to look into providing a report that could help identify trends.

Gregory reported on the status of TRORC's annual audit, noting that the final version was not yet available however no concerns had been raised by the auditors.

8. Presentation by Matt Dunne from the Center for Rural Innovation

Matt Dunne is the Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Rural Innovation (CORI), headquartered in Hartland, VT. CORI's main focus is to empower rural communities through philanthropy. CORI currently has a network of 18 innovation hubs across the US, including one in Springfield, VT. Additional information about CORI and its mission and activities is available as an attachment to these minutes.

9. Executive Director Updates

Gregory announced the hiring of a new regional planner – Jake Palant – who will be starting in January. TRORC has secured its Creative Economy grant and the resulting increase in workload requires additional staff.

Money from the State of Vermont continues to be made available to help towns fund transportation-related projects. This is keeping staff busy as well.

The Legislature will be starting up soon. TRORC will continue to follow activity related to Act 250, Housing, and COVID-relief work, among others. Gregory noted that the issue of using mail-in ballots for Town Meetings will also be addressed.

Commissioner Dir shared news that an aide in Senator Leahy's office has announced that money for renewable energy is expected to come to all the states within the next year.

Commissioner Long asked for an update on the availability of the pending Housing Study report. Gregory noted that the report was still being worked on and as it will be an electronic document with links and maps, etc., is likely still a few months into the future.

Commissioner Mackay asked for additional information on the Creative Economy grant. Gregory said that marketing, branding, convening and reporting are all elements of the project, however there will likely be some changes made to the project scope given that it's a new project. He also noted that TRORC may need to hire outside help to work on the marketing aspects of the project.

The next Board meeting will be held on February 24, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:
Lori Kay, Finance Manager, December 17, 2020



The Center On Rural Innovation

Building digital economy ecosystems in
rural America



My odd career. . . .



VT State Representative and Senator

Enacted VT's first broadband grant program



Rural Entrepreneur

Director of Marketing at Logic Associates; helped grow company to over 100 employees



National Director

Led PowerUP initiative to bridge rural digital divide



Director of Community Affairs

Based in VT, led all US philanthropy and engagement for Google Fiber rollout



Founder

Focused on catalyzing economic development in Rural America



The Center on Rural Innovation



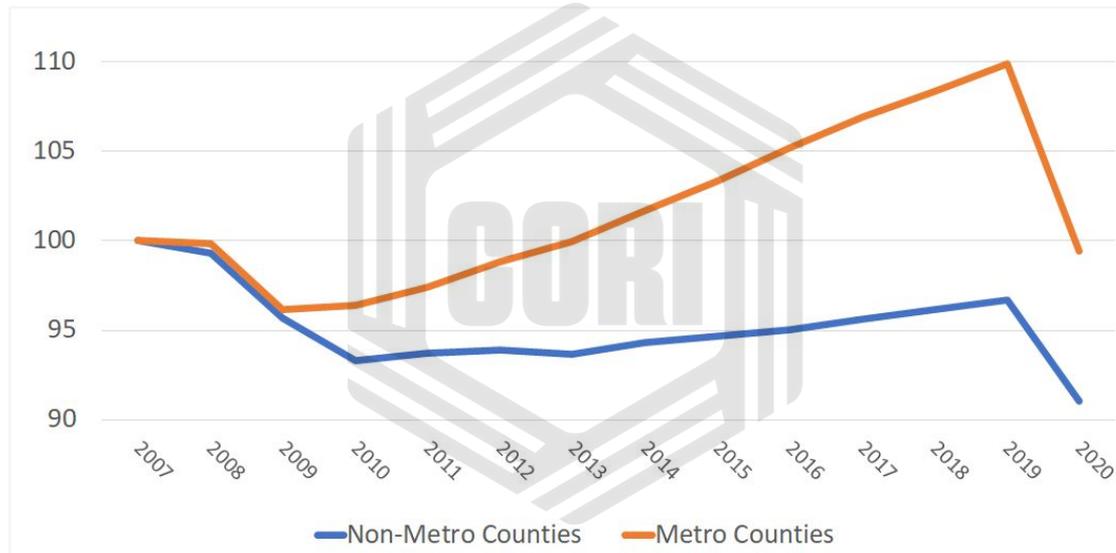
THE CENTER ON RURAL INNOVATION

Advancing economic prosperity in rural America through the creation of inclusive digital economy ecosystems that support scalable entrepreneurship and tech job creation

We're facing the largest rural opportunity gap in history

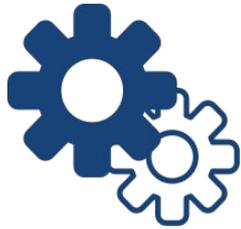
Rural vs. Metro area job growth 2008-2015

Employment relative to 2008 levels



Source: BLS

How did this happen?



AUTOMATION



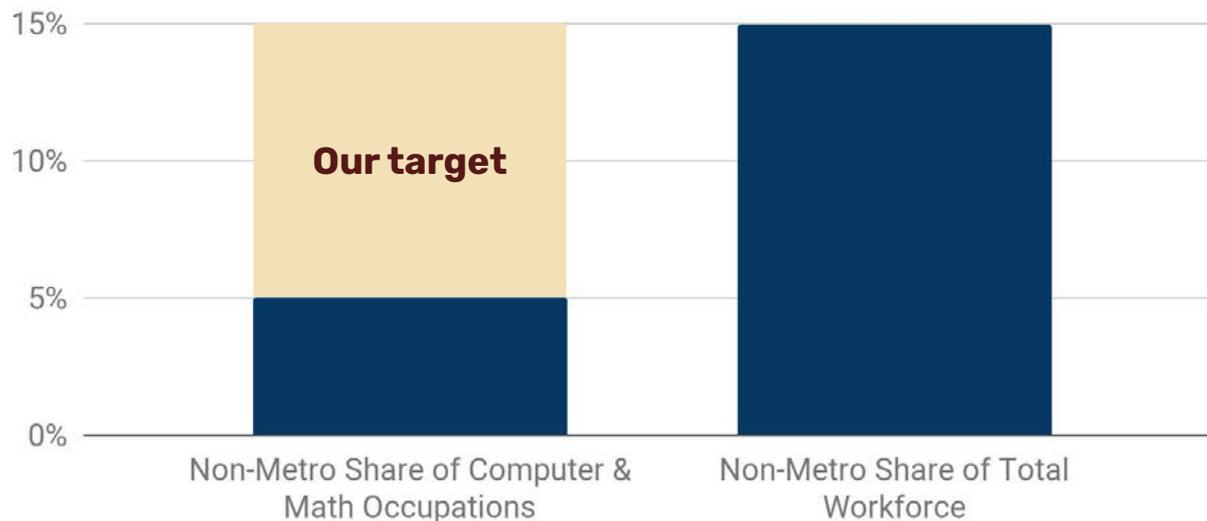
GLOBALIZATION



DECLINE IN E-SHIP

Rural America has been left out of the digital economy

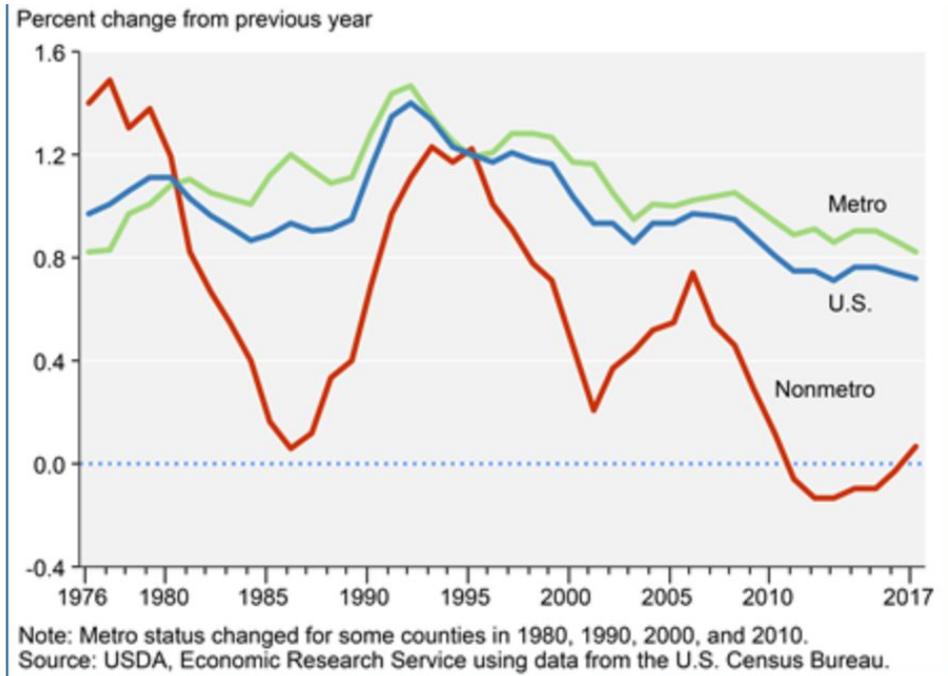
Non-Metro Share of Computer & Math Occupation Employment - 2018



Source: American Community Survey

This divide has serious repercussions for rural areas

Population change 1976-2017 by area type



Source: USDA Economic Research Service

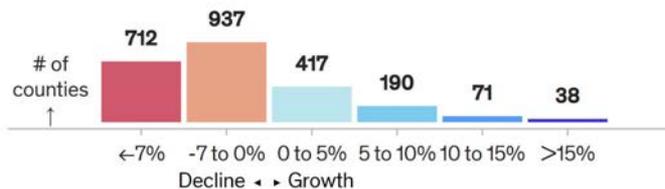
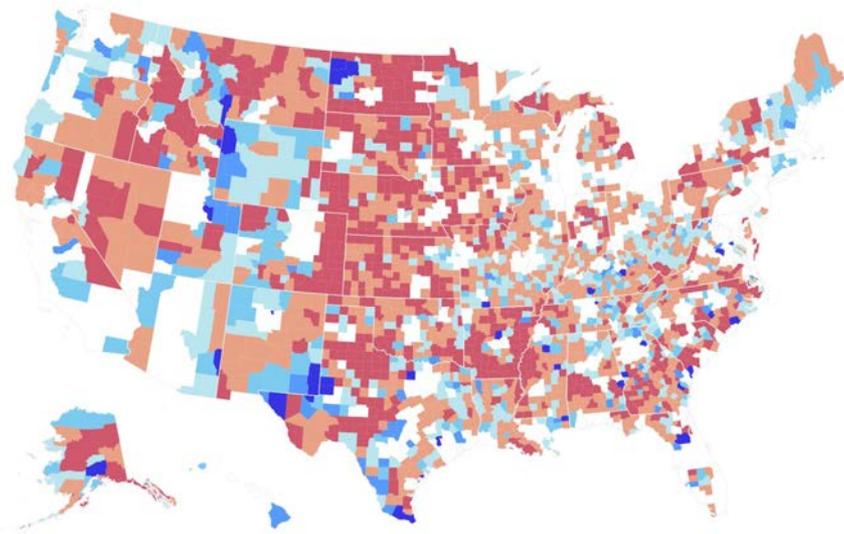
22% more likely to leave rural after taking on student debt

43% lower rate of college degree attainment

45% higher rate of drug-related deaths

Automation threatens to leave rural America further behind

Net job growth due to automation in rural and low growth counties - 2017 - 2030



“At the high end of the displacement spectrum are 512 counties, home to 20.3 million people, where more than 25 percent of workers could be displaced. The vast majority (429 counties) are rural areas in the Americana and distressed Americana segments.”

Map and quote source: McKinsey Global Institute

**There is
opportunity for
change...**



Digital Jobs



- Software engineering (\$107,510)
- Web development (\$73,760)
- Data science (\$122,840)
- IT Specialist (\$54,760)
- Cyber Security Analyst (\$99,730)
- Database Administrator (\$93,750)

For more examples, visit [BLS Computer and Information Technology Occupations](#)

Tech Scalable Startups

Tech Supported Startups

- Scalable products and services companies that utilize tech to scale
- Note: avoid over dependency in your ecosystem on a single industry focus

Examples:

- Ada OK: [LegalShield](#) - legal service products
- Taos NM: [Rerouted](#) - used outdoor recreation gear resale platform
- Cedar City UT: [Outdoor Vitals](#) - backpacking outfitter

Software/Automation Startups

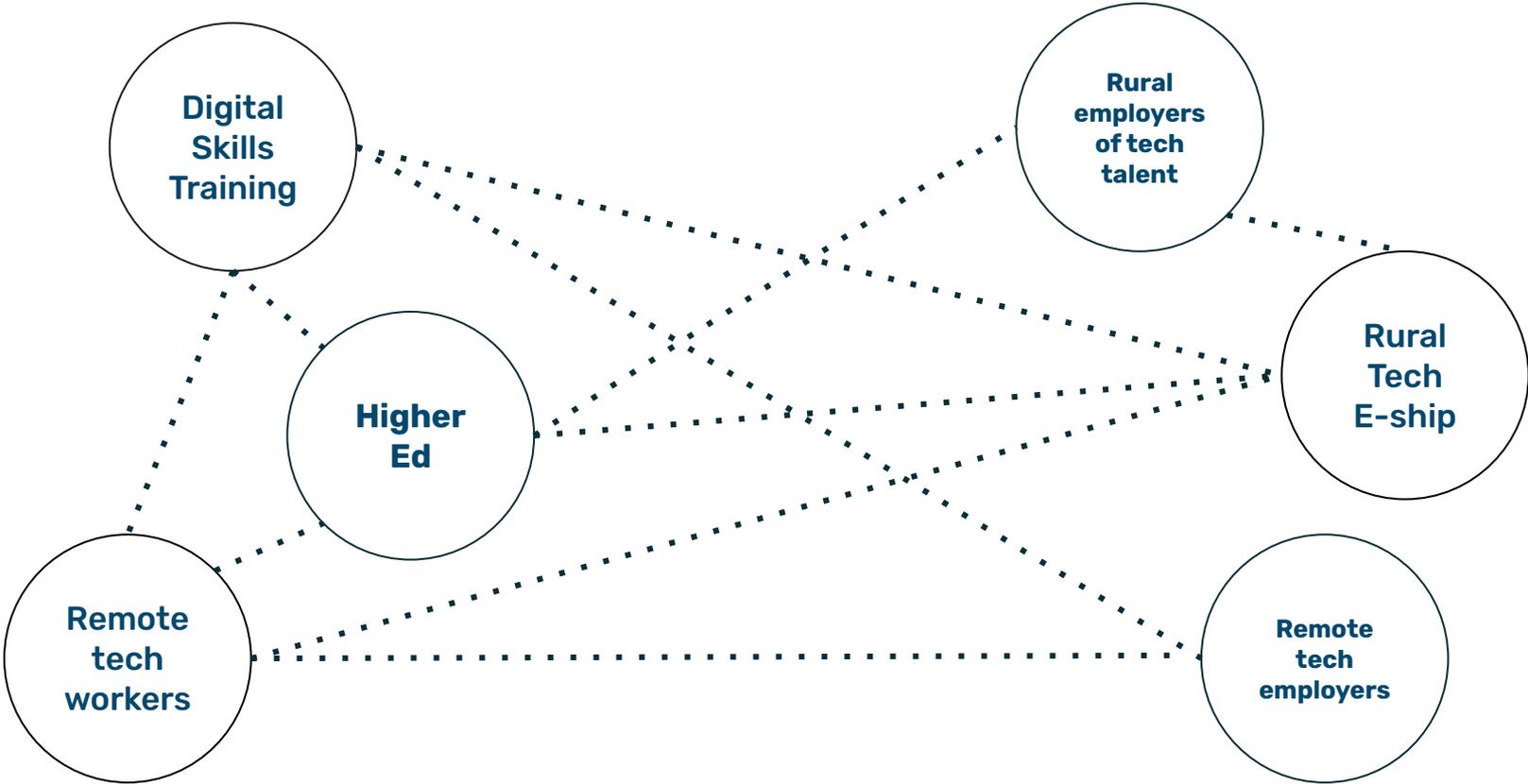
- Software scalable is low touch, doesn't require physical product, easier to scale, geographically neutral

Examples:

- Durango CO: [Pluralsight \(Gitprime\)](#) - data skill-building and development process flow service
- Cape Girardeau: [carGO](#) - delivery, rideshare software with local teams to ensure quality
- Cedar City UT: [TouchMD](#) - medical imaging software
- Portsmouth OH: [Yost Labs](#) - VR hardware and software development



Closing the rural tech gap requires an ecosystem approach



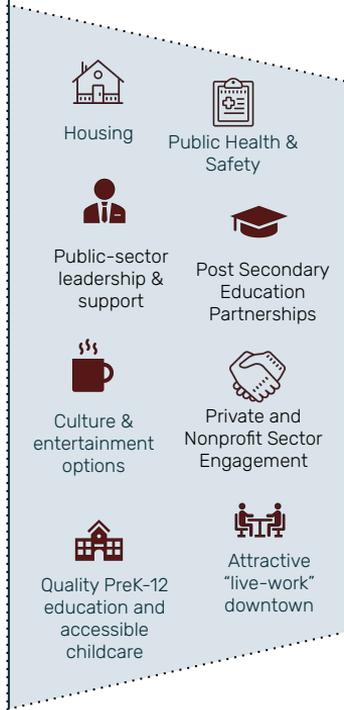
We've also determined a robust model for community progress

- Clear outcomes
- Deep understanding of required elements
- Awareness of interdependence of all elements

Digital Economy Ecosystem Model: Elements & Outcomes

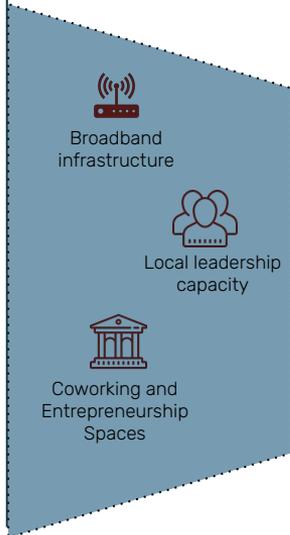
Foundational elements

Create and support the raw materials for growth; each community will have a different mix; not all will be robust but serious gaps will prevent progress



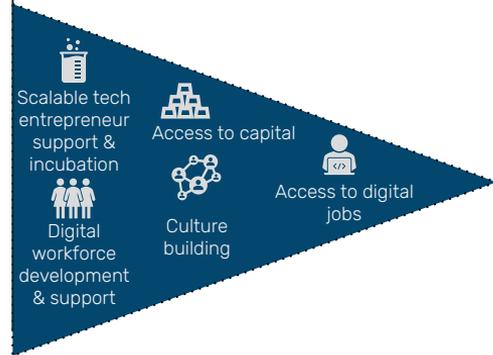
Infrastructure

Necessary elements to participate in the digital economy; without these communities will fail to achieve key outcomes; not sufficient to drive outcomes on their own



Direct drivers

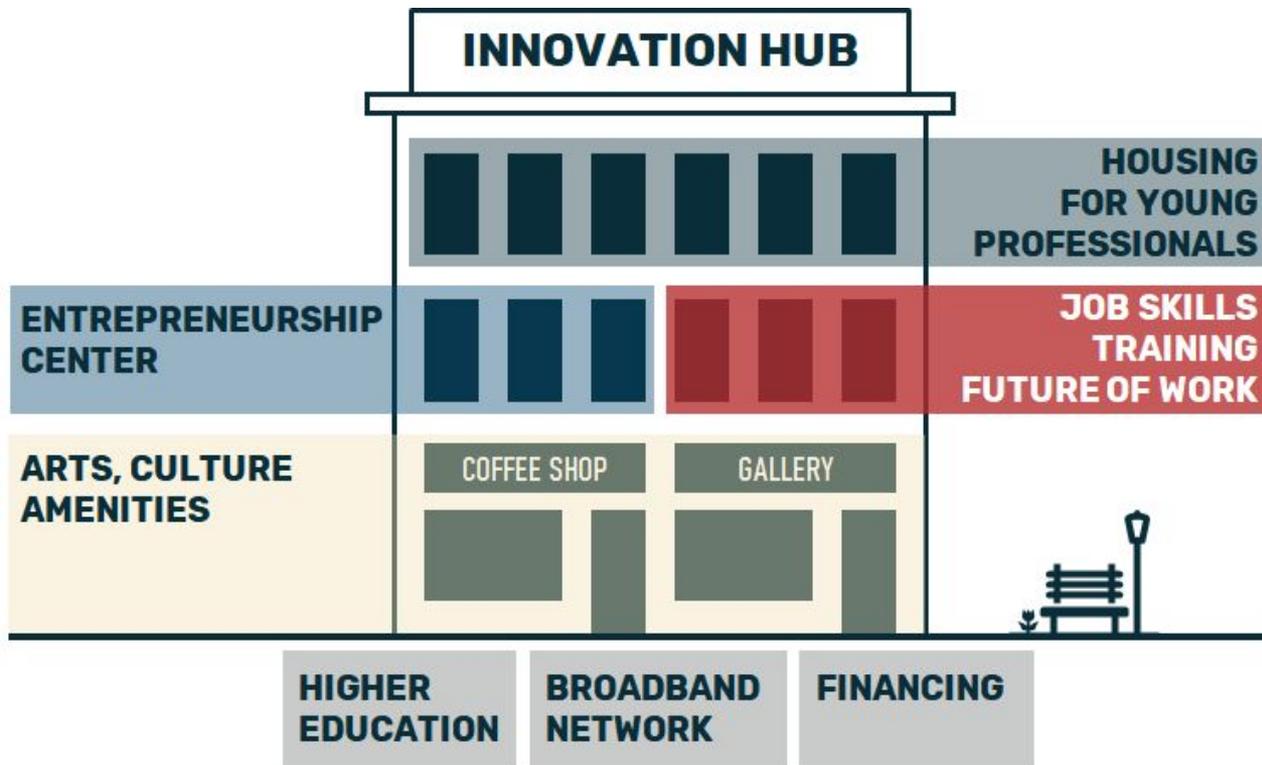
The local capacity and access to opportunity (funding, mentors, etc.) that enable communities to successfully compete in the digital economy



Outcomes



We help communities build Innovation Hubs to connect their key assets in one centralized location



Digital Economy Ecosystem Infrastructure



Broadband

- Digital jobs and tech startups require fast, affordable, and reliable internet that can only be provided by broadband
- Fiber internet is the ideal form of internet connection because it can give rural areas an edge over urban areas



Local Leadership Capacity

- It takes an ecosystem – a network of partners aligned building and growing a digital economy ecosystem, for a community to be successful.
- Dedicated, full-time employees working on digital economy related-projects is critical to your success



Coworking & Entrepreneurship Spaces

- Physical space is critical to supporting a culture of remote work and tech startups
- Shared space makes the digital economy visible in small towns.

Focusing on Digital Drivers



Scalable Tech Entrepreneur Support & Incubation

- Incubators, accelerators, and other methods to provide direct support to entrepreneurs



Access to Capital

- Sources of capital suitable for scalable businesses
- Full capital stack



Access to digital jobs

- Companies that hire tech talent
- Cultures of remote work



Digital workforce dev. & support

- Efforts to develop a digital workforce, including and going beyond traditional methods (e.g., bootcamps)



Culture Building

- Programming & outreach to foster a culture of tech and innovation. Current & future entrepreneurs connect and inspire one another.

CORI's Approach



CORI addresses unique community challenges through a holistic ecosystem approach

Filling local capacity gaps



Community capacity building and leadership development



Peer-to-peer learning and networking



Workforce training and skilling



Entrepreneurship support & mentoring



Placemaking

Increasing access to resources and opportunity



Distributed work



Direct investment



Connections to capital



Access to expertise



Broadband assistance



Grant-writing support

Combatting false narratives and perceptions



Mapping and data



Research and thought leadership



Policy input & comment

CORI's Rural Innovation Network is made up of 18 states in 4 time zones

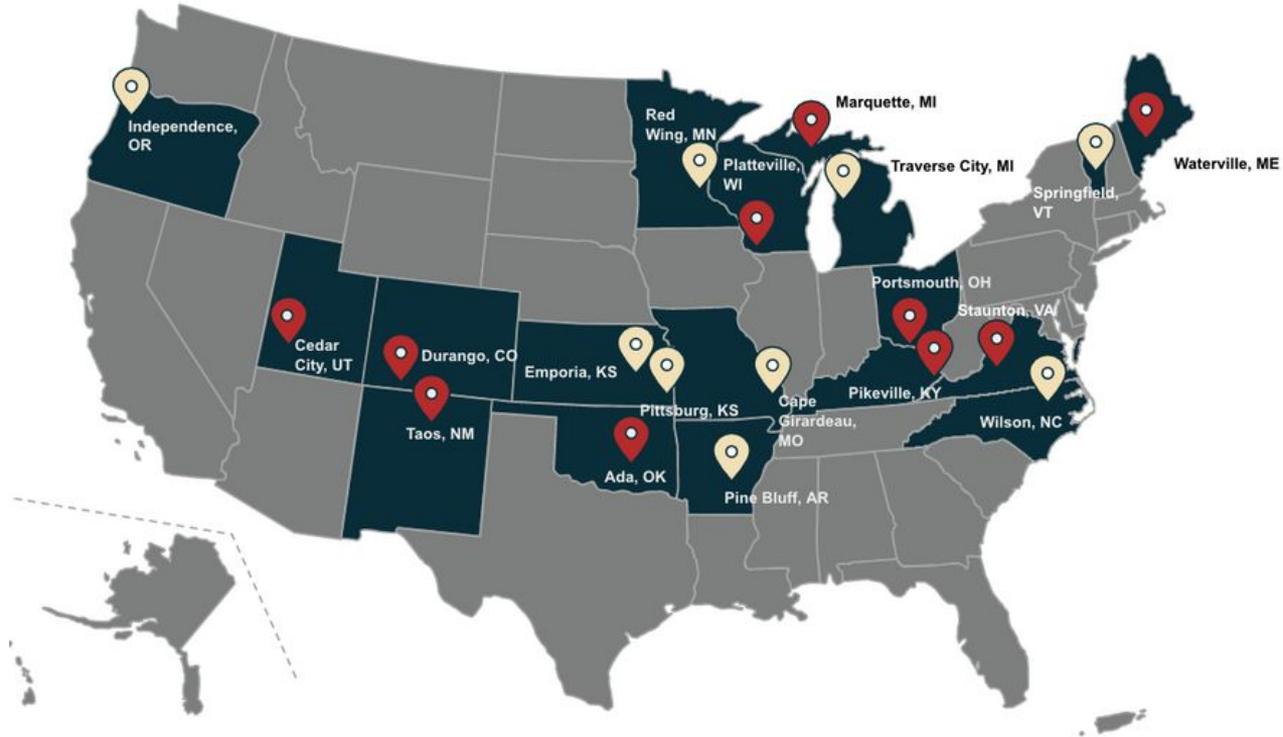
Rural Innovation Network Communities



'19 Cohort



'20 Cohort



Supporting ecosystem leaders

Knowledge

- Access to expertise on the CORI team
- Proven models and best practices developed by other rural communities
- Case studies and research on successful ecosystems
- Data tools to understand local economy dynamics

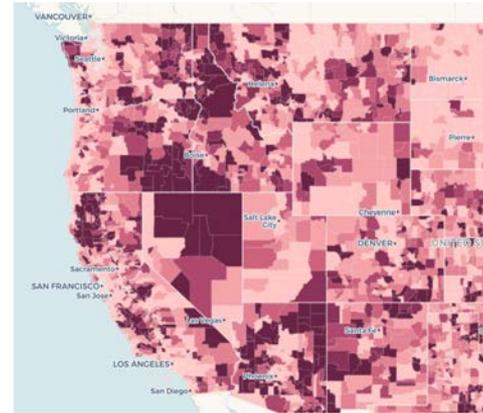
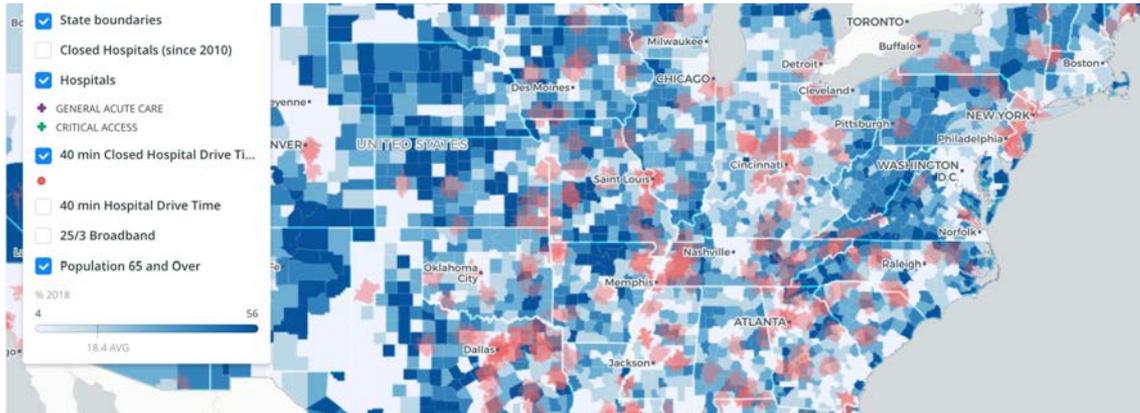
Resources & Partnership

- CORI Seed Fund
- Digital skilling partners - Udacity, CodePath, Flatiron
- Pro-bono legal support for tech entrepreneurs - Venable
- Capacity building and professional development

Connections

- Slack workspace for Rural Innovation Network leaders and staff
- Community of practice working groups that collaborate on creating innovations around shared interests--evirtual events for entrepreneurs, strategies for attracting remote workers

CORI creates mapping and visualization tools to help people better understand rural America

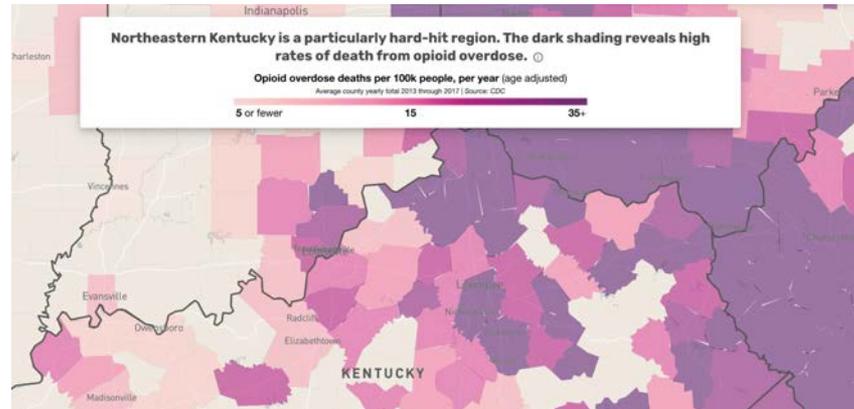


Scene
An example

An example...

Let's just look at one of these as an example. The town of Gladewater, TX is in Gregg county and Census tract 102. (In case you didn't know Gladewater is actually where Johnny Cash wrote "Walk the Line"). It has roughly 7.5k residents and, in addition to OZ status, also qualified for NMTC status due to its poverty rate of 23.5%.

Simply put, the town is not a place most people would look to invest. But, based on other metrics there is promise here. CT 102 has an investment score from Urban and the St Louis Fed of 8 of 10. It had 1.2k more business starts than deaths last year. And, roughly 81 STEM degrees created per year per 1000 residents. It is also close to 3 institutions of higher ed and has broadband.



CORI's seed fund addresses the entrepreneurship gap by investing in rural tech entrepreneurs



\$3.55M

raised to-date

14

investors in fund, including
successful tech
entrepreneurs and venture
capitalists

150+

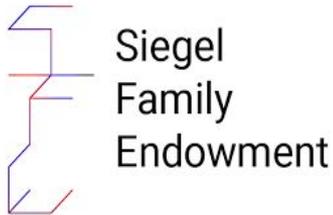
operating companies
reviewed to-date as
part of investment
diligence



CORI has a national network of resources and partners

Reid Hoffman
LinkedIn Co-Founder

VENABLE^{LLP}



McKinsey
& Company

// FLATIRON
SCHOOL

Rural
LISC

We know there is always more work to be done

*Most of America's Rural Areas
Are Doomed to Decline*

CITYLAB

*Getting Real About Rural America:
Nobody knows how to reverse the
heartland's decline*

**The
New York
Times**

*Why do Americans stay when
their town has no future?*

**Bloomberg
Businessweek**

**The
Washington
Post**

*"When we think of America, we
shouldn't think rural"*

CORI is working to change the narrative about rural America



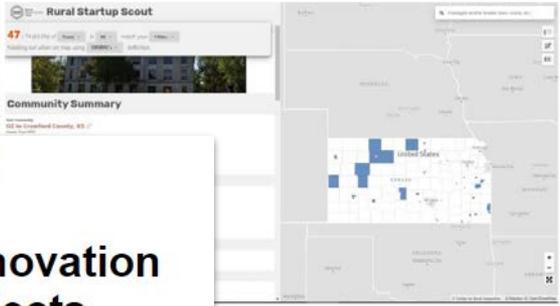
MARKETPLACE
For small-town economic success, broadband is the new railroad

Peggy Lowe | Apr 17, 2019

Q&A: New Maps Help Communities and Investors Focus on Opportunities

A suite of online tools is designed to help rural leaders, policy makers, and investors shine the light on the building blocks of economic growth in rural areas and Opportunity Zones.

By Bryce Oates — On Dec 30, 2019 — Last updated Dec 31, 2019



Rural Startup Scout

47

Community Summary

This view focuses on Kansas. Blue areas are federally designated Opportunity Zones. (Rural Opportunity Map)



AXIOS
EXPERT VOICES

Automation in mobility is outpacing skills re-training programs

What's happening: As artificial intelligence is integrated into professions ranging from administrative work to customer support, people will need to be trained to work alongside machines — but also on non-technological skills, like customer service and decision making.

- Organizations like the [Michigan Mobility Institute](#), the [Center on Rural Innovation](#) and [ARM Institute](#) are focused on skills training for workers traditionally employed in manufacturing.
- Training courses offered by [Coursera](#), [EdX](#) and [more](#) teach data science and how to build AI-powered tech, including autonomous vehicles.

MPR News Presents

Tom Friedman of New York Times speaks about global, local challenges

MPR News Staff | September 25, 2019 1:00 a.m.



yahoo!
finance

CORI Innovation Fund selects Proximity for opportunity zone investment

CISION PR Newswire



WIRED

MATT DUNNE | BUSINESS | 09.26.2019 09:00 AM

Small-Town Ingenuity Is Making Gigabit Broadband a Reality

Thank You

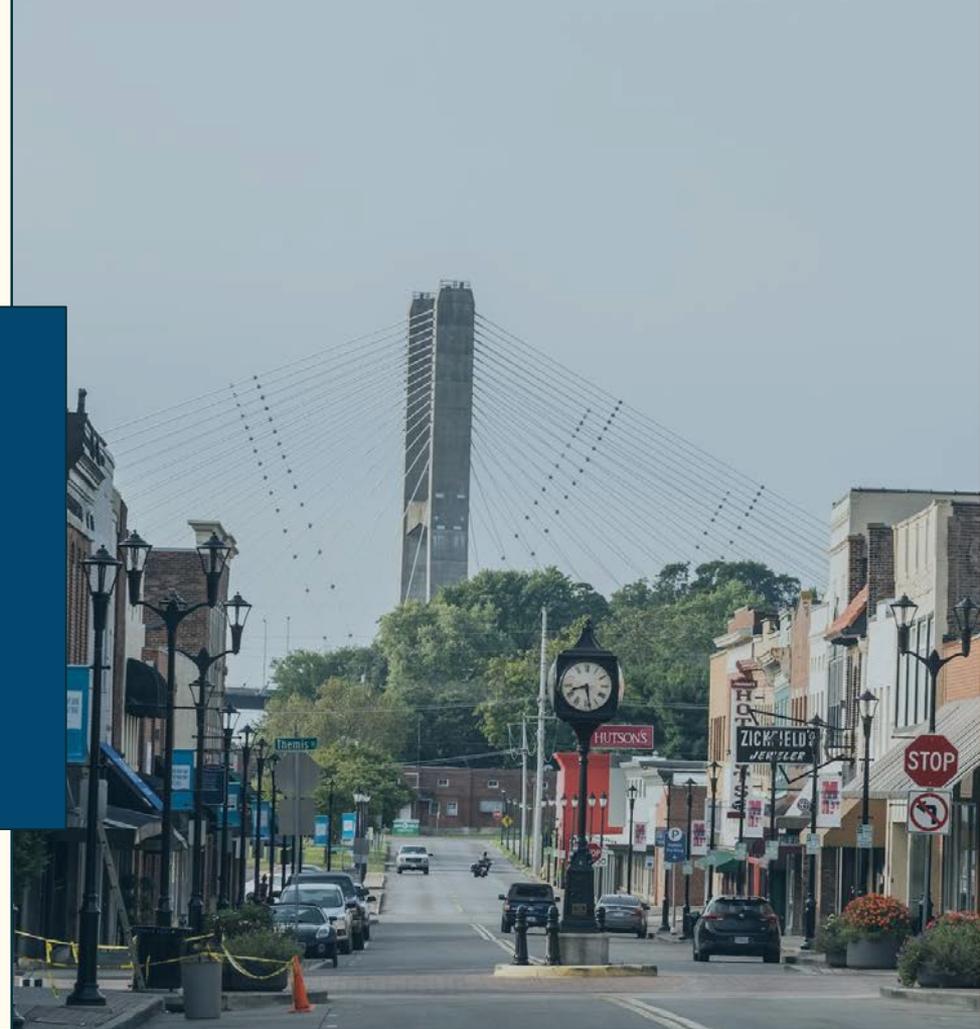
www.ruralinnovation.us



Center
on Rural
Innovation

Rural Innovation Network

Case Studies



Some communities have emerging digital economies with strong assets... like Cape Girardeau, MO



Scalable Tech Entrepreneur Support & Incubation

- **Codefi Innovation Hub, founded 2014-** Entrepreneur support and formal incubator efforts; 1st50K



Coworking & eship spaces

- **Codefi** - Coworking space & entrepreneur networking



Digital workforce dev. & support

- **Code Labs One**- 20-week adult coding course



K-12 STEM education

- **Youth Coding League-** After school program for middle & schools using Google's CS First curriculum



Broadband:

- **Downtown Cape Connect:** Delivers free public WiFi and affordable fiber- **10 Gb Fiber**



Access to digital jobs

- **Codefi-** pairs entr. needing tech talent with newly skilled workers, and expert support

Early outcomes

- **YCL:** >1000 students trained
- **Code Labs:** >150 adults trained
- Supported **50 startups** creating **180+ jobs**, and raising **~\$20M** of equity



...and Traverse City, Michigan



Scalable Tech Entrepreneur Support & Incubation

- **20Fathoms**- Innovation hub founded in 2018
- Provides entrepreneur support and development resources, w/ 50 partner orgs



Digital workforce dev. & support

- **TCCodes**- Adult computer science education



Access to Capital

- **Northern MI Angels and Boomerang Capital**- \$8M invested in 35 local startups



Coworking & Culture Building

- **20Fathoms**- Coworking space & entrepreneur networking
- TCNewTech Monthly meetups attract **200-300 attendees**

Early outcomes

- **30+ startups** served by 20Fathoms
- **130 jobs** created (half local); **average salary \$95k**
- **\$13M raised by accel grads in last year**
- Emerging Health Tech Cluster



While others are quickly developing - Marquette, MI



Postsecondary Education

- **NMU Sisu Institute-** Design thinking curriculum
- **UP Cybersecurity Institute-** Degree & non-degree ed, research & industry support

K-12 STEM education

- **Cybersecurity Consortium-** Combining 21 districts in cyber skills ed.
- Strong CS, entrepreneurship, and innovation curriculum

Scalable Tech Entrepreneur Support & Incubation

- **Invent@NMU-** Small business dev & supp.
- **Innovate Marquette SmartZone-** Innovation eship support

Access to capital

- **Invest UP-** Private sector economic development
- **Innovation Shore-** Nascent Angel Network

Infrastructure & Foundations

-  **Educational Access Network-** Affordable broadband through UNM
-  Thriving breweries, coffee shops, and culture assets

Many communities are just getting started...

Waterville, ME

- Population: ~16,000
- **2020 Build to Scale awardee**, bringing ~\$600K in federal resources to ecosystem
- **In three years they will:**
 - Build a startup accelerator generating \$15M in sales
 - Cultivate a 30-mentor network
 - Facilitate access to investment capital and deal flow that raises \$10M
 - Marshal academic assets to develop a tech talent pipeline that fills 50 new job

Taos, NM

- Population: ~5,000
- Completed assessment and strategy Sept 2020
- **Strategy goals include:**
 - Raise \$2 million for investment for tech startups
 - 500 adults participating in digital skilling
 - 10 local companies host internships
- **Sample strategic initiatives** to diversify economy from tourism dependency:
 - Storytelling initiative show what's possible
 - Community coworking space
 - Tech mentor program

Ada, OK

- Population: ~17,000
- Completed assessment and strategy Sept 2020
- **Strategy goals include:**
 - 30 new direct jobs
 - \$1.5M invested in at least 5 local tech startups
 - Create a well-established pipeline for digital talent with local employers and remote companies
- **Sample strategic initiatives:**
 - Build entrepreneurial hub
 - Local angel fund
 - Digital workforce initiative
 - Water Tech Accelerator