



Guilford County Broadband Study

Focus Group Meeting Summary

December - January 2022

Prepared by Public Participation Partners in partnership with Guidehouse

Meeting Overview

Guilford County is analyzing the gaps and opportunities for broadband throughout the county. As part of these efforts, the project team conducted six focus group meetings. These meetings were with various stakeholders whose organizations serve populations that may be most impacted by inadequate broadband infrastructure.

The meetings were either 45 minutes on Zoom or 15 minutes over the phone to accommodate participant schedules. They took place on the following dates:

- Wednesday, December 15, 2021 – 10:00-10:45am
- Thursday, December 16, 2021 – 9:00-9:45am
- Monday, December 20, 2021 – 12:00-12:45pm
- Wednesday, January 12, 2022 – 2:30-2:45pm
- Thursday, January 13, 2022 – 11:00-11:15am
- Thursday, January 13, 2022 – 2:00-2:15pm

Eleven (11) stakeholders attended these meetings from the following organizations:

- Guilford County Senior Resources
- Cone Health
- Guilford County Schools
- Ready for School, Ready for Life
- Smithwood Christian Church
- New Hope Community Development Group
- Operation Xcel
- North State
- Greensboro Housing Coalition

The meetings began with a brief study overview and timeline. The project team then took notes on participant responses to discussion questions. A summary of the responses is below. The detailed meeting notes are in Appendix A.

At the end of the meeting, participants received the online survey link to share with their communities. The project team also noted that participants could request paper copies of the survey.

What do members of your community use the internet for?

Education

Many participants relayed that their communities use the internet for educational purposes. This includes both children in a school learning environment and adults seeking technology and job training.

For school-aged children, the internet allows access to:

- virtual learning platforms
- educational videos
- assignment submissions

Some students' families also use school-provided devices that students take home because of a lack of devices in their homes.

Adult learners (often senior citizens) are learning to use the internet itself. They participate in classes through video chat platforms. These classes also include GED and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Accessing Resources and Assistance Programs

Some community members use the internet to access resources for their family. This included items like:

- applying for an Orange Card (which provides access to the Guilford Community Care Network)
- looking up bank information for applications
- applying for programs like rental assistance
- applying for jobs
- navigating to and from locations
- identifying when certain businesses are open

Individuals also use the internet to access food resources. Some food banks have websites or apps that provide locations of available food. Some people also use the internet for grocery pick up and delivery. Additionally, many community-based organizations use social media to advertise available food, educational, and household assistance supplies.

Healthcare

The internet is used for telehealth programs throughout the county. Cone Health has two primary programs that require internet. The first is a school-based program that allows the school to video chat with parents, interpreters, the school nurse, and the child at school. This allows for parents to be involved in their child's healthcare without missing work, incurring travel expenses, etc. However, many parents are unable to use video due to the lack of high-speed internet.

The second program allows for remote patient monitoring for people without insurance. These clients have smart devices that transmit data in real time. A lack of high-speed internet prevents the success of this program.

Professional Use

During the pandemic, many people also began working remotely. This has required individuals to have reliable internet.

Personal Use

Personal uses include activities such as:

- keeping in touch with family and friends
- participating in volunteer programs
- accessing entertainment and online video streaming services

One participant noted that many people in their community would use the internet if they had it available. During COVID when one of their computer labs closed, people would come and sit outside the facility to use the internet.

How often do you experience disruptions or slower than expected upload/download speeds? Approximately what speed is your internet service? Is it sufficient? Why or why not?

Generally, participants noted that they experienced disruptions in some parts of the county and not in others. Some notable places where disruptions have been high include:

- Stokesdale
- South English Street
- Frazier Elementary School
- Wellburn in High Point
- Eastern Guilford Middle School (no coverage outside their own network)
- Mustard Seed Community Health

Generally, rural areas tend to have less coverage or access to high-speed internet. However, within the cities, there also can be coverage issues. Participants noted that it depends on the internet service provider (ISP). They also noted that ISP options vary depending on location.

In some of the schools there are dead spots where there is no internet. Since everyone in the school is now using a device and the internet, the speeds are very slow. Outside programs come into the schools and cannot use their network, but hotspots do not provide enough coverage.

Students who had been doing well in tutoring programs failed their classes in the height of the pandemic due to an inability to access the internet. The coverage of the hotspots throughout the county was inadequate for their learning needs.

If broadband infrastructure were to be built, this would not be helpful for people without access to devices or data. Equitable access to devices and data also needs to be considered.

Who in your communities have you seen struggle the most with accessing the internet?

Many people use their smart phones as their main way to access the internet. These devices cannot always withstand the individual needs. Expanding internet access should include expanding access to availability of devices and training for those devices.

Senior Citizens

Senior citizens often struggle with accessing the internet. This is mostly due to an unfamiliarity with the technology. This is especially difficult when school-aged children have caregivers who are older and struggle to access resources and meeting links.

Limited English Proficiency Populations

Individuals with limited English proficiency sometimes struggle to access the internet. This may be due to unfamiliarity. It is also due to the availability of resources only in English.

Low-Income Populations

Another group that tends to struggle with accessing the internet is low-income individuals. These individuals may not have access to devices. Additionally, high-speed internet packages may be too expensive.

Students and Parents

During the pandemic, students and their parents could have driven to the school parking lot to use the internet. However, this required a means of transportation and time. Some schools provided hotspots, but they didn't provide enough coverage in many areas.

Many students might not have had the battery life on their device to complete all their work in the school parking lots. Additionally, many students were not given training on how to use school-provided devices.

How might your community benefit from having better internet access?

The topic of equity and access to opportunity was commonly discussed during this question. Expanding internet access would equal the playing field by providing people from all walks of life with access and capabilities they lack.

Access to Healthcare

Access to the internet can mean equitable access to healthcare. People in the community can't access telehealth without reliable internet access and lose the chance to speak with a physician. Telehealth can also be a more affordable option.

Access to Education

Better internet would help Guilford's children expand their knowledge and educational opportunities. Reliable and fast internet is more engaging for students, who are less likely to want to complete assignments if videos take too long to load or buffer.

Internet access has given teachers new resources such as Google phone numbers and Class Dojo (an online educational tool) to improve communication. Virtual learning also teaches students how to type and use the internet safely. Online learning can extend the school day and provide afterschool programming for kids.

All children having access to high-speed internet would help create resilient, workforce-ready young adults. It would give opportunities to children who may not have had them otherwise.

Access to Work Opportunities

With internet access, job, workforce development, and training opportunities increase. Reliable internet is also often necessary for users to submit job and service applications.

However, access to the internet may not solve all barriers. Some users continue to struggle with not knowing how to use online platforms to find the information they need.

Access to Social Connections

Internet access can also reduce isolation. This is especially true for the senior population who have limited mobility that has only been compounded by COVID.

Access to Community Leadership Training

Access to the internet can mean leadership and capacity development. There is a desire to create more community leaders. These leaders can schedule meetings and lead advocacy groups, but they need more opportunities and resources.

Access to Public Transportation

Many people in Guilford County don't have personal transportation and rely on one or more busses. Better internet access can help people see the bus schedules and routes to get around.

How might we bridge the digital divide in Guilford County if funding was available?

The focus group participants identified several different options to help bridge the digital divide in Guilford County. These included:

- Using various ways to identify who needs internet access and what devices and service they have. This includes using phone-based and paper-based surveys.
- Providing financial support to non-profits already doing this work.
- Helping the Title 1 schools with digital supplies for every student. This includes providing WiFi hotspots, tablets, headphones, and mice throughout the county.
- Creating simple and consistent processes for accessing internet bill assistance programs.
- Providing non-profits funding to assist individuals applying for these programs. This includes funding to paying back past-due bills.
- Providing data or other WiFi publicly, with a consideration for internet security.
- Ensuring high-speed internet is available in the smaller towns and rural areas of Guilford County. Many participants noted that increasing internet access should be approached through an equity lens.
- Ensuring new infrastructure is large enough to meet current and future needs of the entire community.
- Addressing disparities in past internet infrastructure and development.
- Partnering with private companies to run infrastructure to not reinvent the wheel.

One participant noted that by being forward-thinking and making sure all citizens have access, Guilford County's reputation throughout the state would improve. Another noted that bridging the gap also means decreasing the stigma around not having access.

Appendix A - Meeting Notes

What do members of your community use the internet for?

- Senior Resources of Guilford - All older adults, many of baby boomers are literate with the internet, many are not. During the pandemic, we received money to offer tech classes for those who wanted to learn (loan tablets, some had smart phones).
- New Hope Community Development Group - Primary service area is east Greensboro (along S. English St corridor) - Many WOULD use Internet if they had access to keep in touch with family and friend or learn about resources. Have a small computer lap (at New Hope Missionary Church) - training, technology, finding jobs, etc. Prior to that, young people would sit outside of the building to connect to the internet. Tap into workforce development opportunities. Find out other resources in the community.
- Partnered with Guilford Tech - people would come to take GED and ESL classes. (A lot of this was before COVID but still on-going.)
- People could come and apply to their Orange card. People would have to look up info like bank statements to gain access to that service.
- People were able to get tablets from a group - a way to more easily connect to the internet. When children were doing most of their learning online - that was a problem because of lack of devices and internet.
- Foster grandparent program (allows low-income individuals go into schools and mentor youth not at grade level). Those volunteers had an opportunity to learn how to mentor virtually with training. Many had not previously been familiar with tech that exists today.
- Many people live in neighborhoods where the broadband is not adequate. Need to increase that.
- Six rural outreach programs - internet capacity is something people in rural communities struggle with. Need for increase capacity for infrastructure but also train people on how to get connected and use the tech.
- School-based telehealth for elementary schools primarily in challenged areas (majority of children on Medicaid and children of color). 4 elementary schools in Guilford County - have a telepresenter who does a complete exam for remote pediatrician. Mental health services. Eventually would like to offer services for staff.
- The program triangulates an interpreter, the parents, and children. Many parents are unable to visually participate (only through phone call). Also, able to have a virtual follow up would be helpful.
- Remote patient monitoring - for people without insurance. People have to use a smart device to transmit data back and forth to coaching team. Real time data transfer is required to be successful. (In rural parts of the county, including north Guilford). Many in broadband desert areas. Many participants take device and phone to a trusted broadband location to access.
- Partnered with Guilford County library to explore digital literacy. People need to know how to use their connection to access care that advances the health of their family. Need to avoid expenses like leaving work, travel, childcare. Having access to internet helps them avoid these expenses or threat of loss of job for missing work.
- Operation Xcel - afterschool for Title I or low-income youth. The youth that they serve need the internet for school work (especially during virtual learning during COVID).
- Greensboro Housing Coalition - Pre-Covid met in person for everything (community meetings, trainings). Now have to use Zoom. Applications for programming or resources - a lot of community members need access to internet for this (ex. rental assistance).
- Foust Elementary - Parent meetings and parent engagement initiatives are virtual. Need internet for two-way communication between school and community.
- Operation Xcel - monthly parent meetings, need to go online for those.
- Professional community - typically use the internet for accessing educational platforms
- Students use internet to access assessments and tasks. Can take devices home. Had students say the devices are not only used by them, but also their family where adults in the household do not have devices. Some students don't have internet

- Use the internet for YouTube, educational materials, enhance the educational experience. Opportunities to do their own research.
- Devices that the students use: Chromebooks. Had ThinkPads at the beginning of the pandemic, the County realized that the operating systems couldn't keep up with all the things they had to do, especially with remote learning. Devices were supplied by Guilford County.
- Internet for social media, using internet to create online businesses. Social media to help launch businesses. Creative space to express yourself.
- Use internet for navigation, job searches, identify which businesses are open, etc.
- Students can use the Google voice search, especially for students who struggle with spelling. Helps students access information and reduces barriers between them and other students.
- Everything - accessing groceries (instacart), accessing google/youtube for educational purposes and leisure, for the majority of our lives and connecting to resources and helping families to resources
- Food banks in the area - one of which has an app that pinpoints where food resources are based on location. Greater High Point Food Alliance. Depending on the plan you have, folks are trying to conserve data.
- Some of the other food banks also have websites that do the same. Food banks are an important area.
- During natural disasters or snow events (like this weekend) your cable goes out so accessing weather information online can be challenging. WiFi may go out and you'll rely on cellular data.
- A lot of organizations in Guilford County use social media to publicize drive-thru backpack supplies/diapers/food/hygiene/etc.
- School and education access is a big one.
- My immediate community - several people work from home, and of course when school was closed kids were using it for school work, and if kids are having to stay home they can meet with their teachers online
- A lot of it is basically primary entertainment - Netflix, Hulu, tv providers
- Ready for School Ready for Life is working on an integrated data system called agency finder that helps people in the community find resources.
- Parenting tips that can be accessed online, or other websites (basics Guilford that offers advice to parents and caregivers with easy and actionable items)

How often do you experience disruptions or slower than expected upload/download speeds? Approximately what speed in your internet service? Is it sufficient? Why or why not?

- You can build a super highway, but if you don't provide cars, no one gets anywhere. Our customers have a struggle with data - they have data limitations. In patient monitoring - people drop out as data disappears. Have to address equitable access to data in the same way as access to broadband.
- Computer classes with seniors - We've have folks have to stop the class because their internet access is really slow or they disconnect. When the teacher is moving on, people fall behind because of slow internet. On South English Street (have experienced this).
- On the Sanctuary side - that side seems to run faster than in the multi-purpose center. At one time the church was connecting the two buildings together for better and faster speed.
- Need to have a wholistic approach - have to look at not just broadband, but also routers and data plans, etc.
- Mustard Seed Community Health (non-profit) - often the system would go down with no internet service. This would cause them to have to use paper forms and physician couldn't use computer to take notes.
- Foust Elementary - doesn't have interruptions very often. May have temporary delays, but GCS does a good job of keeping things running. Older building does have dead spots, but otherwise speed is sufficient.
- Operation Xcel is all over the county, so it depends on where they are as to the speed and disruptions. At the main office (Stokesdale) there seems to be a lot of disruptions where the internet goes down. The internet service is not sufficient at all times - it goes down too often. Before COVID they were in various schools the internet wasn't as good (couldn't tie into the school systems). Had trouble at Wellburn in High Point, and had trouble with a hotspot at Jackson (2200 Ontario St in Greensboro). Eastern Guilford Middle School has no coverage outside of their own network.
- Some children failed when it was all virtual and Operation Xcel gave them hotspots, but the hotspots didn't work in their homes. The coverage of the hotspots wasn't sufficient. They didn't have the transportation to get to the places they could go to do their school work. The buses they sent out with internet didn't reach their houses. Because they weren't able to log on, they failed, even though they were doing well before COVID.
- It depends on where they are - Greensboro Housing Coalition. One of the churches, Center of Cottage Grove - been there a few times to get on computers (when 6 people in the building, it was working super slow). If a lot of people on the network, it doesn't work well. At the main office on Summit Ave, it works well.
- Have basic internet package.
- Disruptions - in the school building there are daily and multiple disruptions because everyone in the building is on the internet. Moves slowly if you're working on the laptop.
- A lot of disruptions on Teams and have to close out and load back up for school meetings. The County or an outside contractor came in and were supposed to do an upgrade.
- Every student is on a Chromebook or iPad, so a lot of students and staff on the internet at once.
- At home - don't experience any disruptions in the internet. Don't have a lot of devices pulling from the internet (smart TV, laptop, and phone).
- Other Guilford County schools did hotspots in buses.
- Helped with the Census - went door to door to help people fill out the Census and to identify where people did not have internet. Did give out some hotspots. Created a public WiFi network for the school that could be accessed by the public if they need it.

- Fairly often. For me, where I live is a more heavily trafficked road, so we recently got fiber. But all the roads off of this road, don't have that. We may have the same service, but the speeds varied greatly. Especially upload speeds, but downloads are slow too. I know an individual who works from home and is required to have a download speed of 6, and sometimes it's so low it doesn't meet that even though it's considered "high speed" so she has to keep a hotspot with her. But that comes with a limited amount of data, and if she runs over she can't do video calls or other things she needs to
- My own experience was much more privileged because I went to my provider and upgraded when I started working from home and found my speeds to be too slow.
- I previously lived in the country in the county and service was disrupted often (meaning moving at lower speeds), there wasn't a tower in the area so the speed was significantly slower
- Don't have a specific answer to that question.
- During the pandemic we moved in town, and I thought the internet would be better, but the difference is that the service will actually cut out completely and come back on later (this is a different service provider than when I was out in the country)
- If you have fiber, like I do, it's pretty consistent. But if you don't, it tends to be pretty slow because the equipment is fairly old.
- More rural or unincorporated areas tend to struggle more.
- Guilford County is both very urban, and very rural at the same time.
- In this area Randolph communication services offers internet. In order to receive fiber, you have to have a certain number of people sign up to get fiber. Then they have a program where they might run it out, but that's very, very rare. People don't always understand that's available.

Who in your communities have you seen struggle the most with accessing the internet?

- People who English is not their primary language. They need to link with interpretive services when we don't have a speaker.
- Seniors - it is a real struggle for them. Some of it is lack of awareness and utilization. Talking to some of the teachers - seniors retaining the information if they don't use it on a regular basis. If there are ways to make it easier for them, it might make it easier for them to retain.
- Making connections automatic, making sign-ins automatic, etc.
- Don't know how people who don't know how to order things online get along in the current world.
- The oldest person to take the class was 88 years old. Range from that age to 50. Retention aspect and knowing how to use things. (Ex. knowing how to Zoom in was a struggle). Used to have people going over to other people's houses to access the internet. Been doing 6-week classes since the beginning of the pandemic.
- Need to link to library system - have a certified digital literacy expert. Need to promote digital literacy for English and non-English speakers.
- If there could be some underwriting of services like Spectrum so people don't have to pay a lot for internet to increase the speeds in their homes. (**All in agreement!)
- Low-income constituents for Operation Xcel - that's who we see struggle with the internet.
- Lot of the kids have caregivers who are much older, like grandparents. They often struggle with access to resources, meeting links, etc. Learning curve for older generation.
- Refugee immigrant populations.
- Affordability and language barrier make barriers to access. Have a pretty big Hispanic population where some of the parents or caregivers do not speak English at all and a lot of applications are in English.
- Programs were advertised on the news and on the internet, but people don't have cable or don't do news, need to make sure that the word of mouth is going around so people can understand how to access some of the programs.
- Transportation - if people could have driven to the school, they could have accessed the internet, but they didn't have a way to get there.
- You have to have a battery for your device, even if you're going to the school parking lot for internet.
- Had a lot of students trying to do tutoring on the phone. Gave some devices to students, but they didn't know how to use them. Give out devices and tutorial sessions.
- Having a lack of infrastructure or place for people to access the internet (library is one example, but there can be others). There are a lot of social determinants of people who need access.
- Connecting and building relationships with refugee resettlement agencies, and organizations that focus on the international/immigrant/refugee population
- Not everyone has a device or a device that is up-to-date and can withstand the needs. Some devices only withstand a certain amount. Some people only using their phones. Expanding internet access includes expanding the availability of the device to help people accomplish what they need (educational attainment and job training, etc.)
- At one point the schools provided hotspot devices for students, maybe increase that resource and making it accessible to students, and built into school budget, beyond this pandemic
- The population that struggled the most were the school's ESL (English as a Second Language) students. The families didn't know how to navigate what to do if they didn't have internet at home. Teachers had to communicate directly with these families and set them up with the hotspots and software that they needed.
- Haven't seen any struggle in the immediate personal community.
- I worked at the Housing Authority, and I know firsthand a lot of low-income families struggle with access

- Elderly citizens, it's not always access but the gap in technology (the education behind it) for instance my grandma would sit on the computer without the internet on b/c she didn't know how to fix it
- Parents of young children who were doing homeschooling during the pandemic. Both in terms of having access to the internet and having enough devices when you have multiple school aged children.
- When I was in Durham, I worked on a fiber project to bring broadband to the area, coming to Greensboro it's the same thing - families don't have access because they don't have the financial resources
- We had a school in the area that provided hotspots, but one of the issues we had - depending on the cell service, it's so bad, you can't use it unless you drive to a different area. Some families were parking in our church's parking lot, but it didn't work. The hotspots were AT&T (I think) but depending on where you are there's some hills that get in the way of the cell service hotspots.
- Family members have to take turns using the device or will park in the parking lot of school buildings so children can download lesson plans or upload homework.
- Parents with kids. That's who I hear from the most. Because a lot of the times budgets are tight for families and investing in the higher speed they need is difficult.
- If multiple kids are doing virtual learning, you need pretty high speeds to run multiple video calls and Google Meets to make it work.

How might your community benefit from having better internet access?

- Equitable healthcare access.
- Job opportunities.
- Workforce development opportunities.
- A lot of people don't have personal transportation and they're catching buses. They might be catching multiple buses. Better access in the community might help some of that problem.
- Especially with COVID (and prior) - people in the community can't do telehealth because they don't have internet or devices. That problem of not being able to talk to the physician.
- For seniors - reduces isolation and increases socialization. With COVID and limited mobility and cold weather - the ability to remain connected with our friends and family reduces the cost for doctors' visits and mental health treatment needed.
- Education attainment, not just for children but also adults.
- There's an application for everything - jobs, services, etc.
- Leadership and capacity development. Want to be able to create more community leaders who can do a lot of the work, schedule meetings, leading advocacy groups. Providing them with more opportunities and resources.
- Knowledge piece - expanding our kids' knowledge. Opportunities for families to engage in job training. Be able to give expanded education to kids online as an extension of the school day.
- Equals the playing field if people of all walks have the access and capabilities because you're locked out of a lot if you lack the access and knowledge to use the internet.
- It takes out a lot of the frustration of lagging internet.
- The way that we're using internet in schools and students using it at home, the quicker the internet is, the more engaging it is. (Ex. watching a video in science, buffering impacts the students' engagement). Students are less likely to want to do assignments if they're struggling to access the internet. Have to support students with this.
- Have utilized Google numbers and Class Dojo for communications.
- Have seen some struggle with knowing how to use certain platforms and how to login and find the information they need.
- Has been so much better being able to use virtual learning because it helps students learn how to type and use the internet in the safe way.
- Several people would like to work from home, and their offices would allow them if they had the speeds they needed. With kids, it would be nice for parents to be home to meet them when they get off the bus. Because Guilford County's school policy requires someone be there to meet kids at the end of the road when they get off the bus.
- I could see it opening a lot of doors. It would make education easier, job applications (it seems to be all online these days) - the days of the paper application are behind us.
- Those areas of access help from an education standpoint, from an ability to access work, education. When you do those things, you have a workforce that is better prepared for different types of industry to come in - we had a big breakthrough with the Toyota Battery plant at the mega site.
- It would help these gaps between the haves and the have nots, there are people who have the ability to pay for high-speed internet and the devices. Other families do not, more access would ease some of those gaps
- Kids that just need to be able to do homework, so many people use the internet for entertainment - that slows it down to a point where they can't do homework or other basics
- If you have higher speed internet, you can be more effective
- These kids grow up to be more resilient at life and makes the entire area more attractive to industry and employers
- Children in their schooling who have better access to the internet can get help with homework or better learning resources - the library isn't convenient to everyone

- Being the in the city with internet cutting out completely, you don't have access to certain things (like if you have a smart home) or security system. A lot of the times I knew the internet was down is because the security camera alerted me it wasn't working. It just disrupts your daily functions of life.
- When you have slow internet speeds, it's discouraging - especially when you have children in the home who are doing virtual learning and it can cause a breakdown in the

home. When you're trying to work from home and your internet is spotty, it disrupts your day.

- The commissioners would like to attract more business, but you need a well-educated workforce with access to the latest training.
- Even if you're physically going to a place to apply for a job b/c you see a sign in the window, chances are you still need to apply online.

How might we bridge the digital divide in Guilford County if funding was available?

- Actually, providing data plans or providing plans that connect people to the internet. There are ways this is done publicly in other communities. Safety of this is important. Get it from the broadband in the community to the broadband in the home (especially underserved locations).
- Making sure that organizations have access to funding - we're already out there doing some of this work, so we can continue doing this work and make referrals and connect with people who would benefit from having access. Not making it hard to help the clients out because we don't have the funding to do so.
- To be able to spread to the 67 Title I elementary schools in Guilford County, we need additional funding for tablets to connect to people who don't have access to healthcare and we want to keep them in school. We keep over 80% of students in school - without access to this program, they have to leave school or end up in the emergency room. (School Based Virtual Care - at Washington School in Jan, Bessmer, Cone Elementary, hope to partner with Mustard Seed)
- Making available some resources to community organizations that are doing outreach that have demonstrated effectiveness at the end-user point.
- Moved into building in Benjamin Parkway in Greensboro - and have struggled with connection to the internet. In the center of Greensboro and still have slow connectivity. It's a lot of money to upgrade.
- Personal home - when BF was in business, the internet would shut down because of the amount of use. Pipeline matters for the amount of data. Put in connections and make sure they're large enough to meet the data needs of the community.
- Universal hotspots throughout the City - not just City proper, but throughout the county. If there was a way for there to be hotspots and internet speeds in McLeansville and southern parts of the county, so the speeds are the same outside the City as inside. Would benefit students throughout the county.
- Looking into the development of some of these communities - what are the options for bringing community-wide internet. Look at past developments to address disparities.
- Hope they will do this with an equity lens - look at Gibsonville, Stokesdale, McLeansville and not just Greensboro.
- Spectrum had a program at the beginning of the pandemic - if you receive SNAP benefits or other benefits, you could receive a benefit. Could there be something like that for families at a certain income or socio-economic status so they can have a lower bill?
- The processes and structures for how to put in applications. Need to make this simple, including just getting on the phone with just one person rather than being passed around. Hopefully make the program more simple and effective, especially with the higher demand for it.
- Thought a lot of the families would be able to take advantage of that program because it was a lot of hoops to jump through. If they had a past bill or already had an account with Spectrum - there were difficulties. It depended on the customer service rep you talked to. If you had a past bill you didn't pay, you couldn't access the program, which seemed unfair. As an organization, we paid off some people's internet bills. People were denied internet for a \$47 bill.
- Survey the families in the schools in various forms. Have been using Google forms, sign-up genius, etc. Using just one mode is not going to be able to reach all parents. Some teachers might not send out information correctly. Use various ways to identify who needs it and what we actually have out there. We like using the internet-based platforms to get information, but if we're looking at those without access, using phone or paper surveys is helpful. This will make sure we're not just hearing from one group.

- It was great that Guilford County was able to give out the devices to students. They started with older students and for elementary schools it was shared for a while but now is one-to-one. Every child having a mouse would be useful. Each child also has a set of headphones purchased through the school (helped with students able to hear and stay focused during virtual engagement).
- Education, when there's a lot of resources available online. Such as the discounted internet services offered during the pandemic - making sure all families in Guilford regardless of need know about this service. How can we promote that throughout the entire community? Even in the health and education systems? So people are inundated with that information so if it becomes a need they have it.
- Bridging the gap would look like - sometimes there's a stigma around who needs something more. This would decrease that stigma, not excluding those that have, but not singling out those who do not have
- Ensuring that everyone has the same access to the good resources would greatly help diminish those gaps
- People in the rural area where access ends at the neighbor's driveway, but they're looking at thousands of dollars to add that service
- If Guilford County had a reputation of being forward thinking and making sure all their citizens have access to these resources it would do a lot for the county's reputation in NC and the country.
- Partnering with some of the private providers like Randolph Communications that just need to expand. This road has fiber, they just need to expand down some side roads - but some of its a lack of information if people get together to ask for it.
- Funds or grants to partner with those private companies to run the infrastructure in those areas, don't reinvent the wheel but work with what's already there