

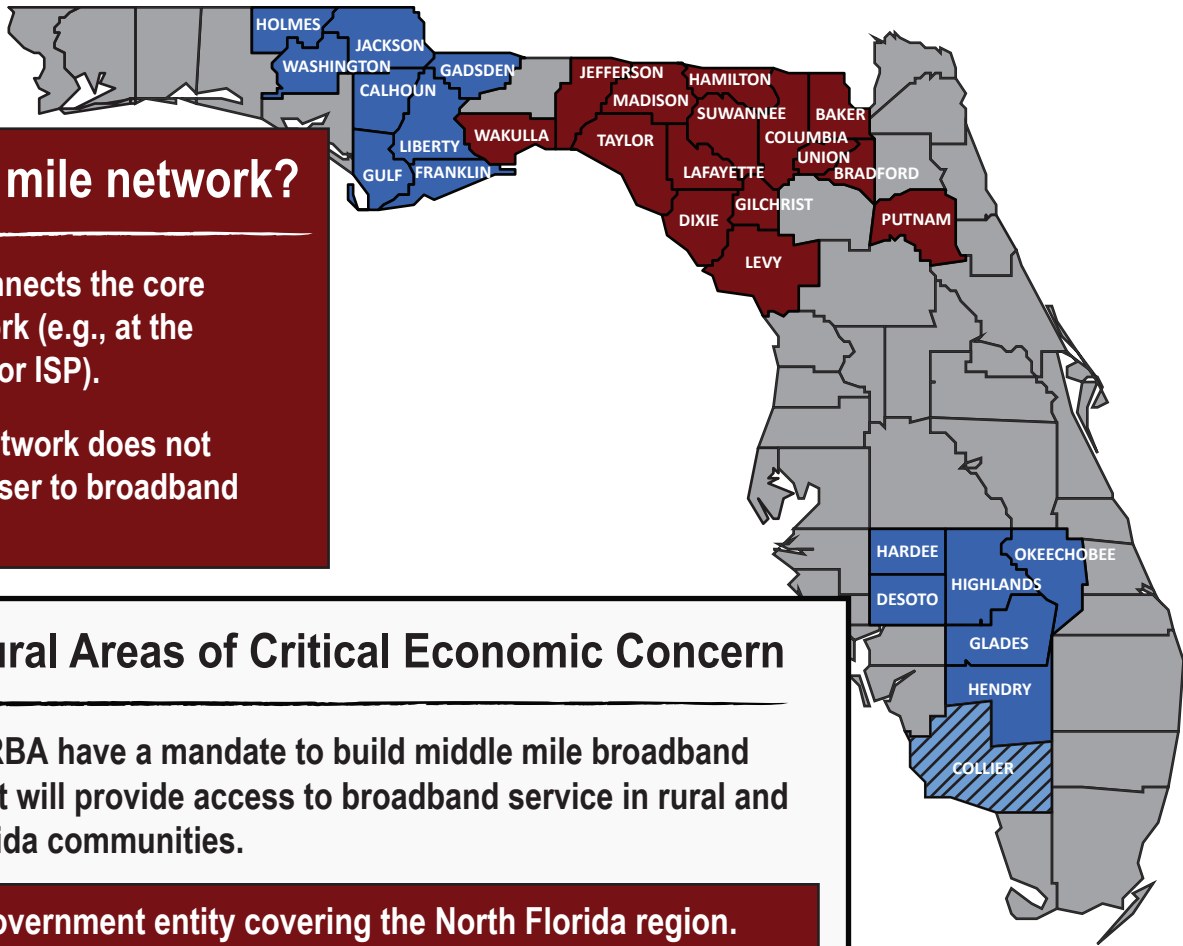


Designing & Implementing Broadband Needs Assessments for Rural Anchor Institutions in Florida

Status as of June 15, 2011

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), through its Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), has awarded Comprehensive Community Infrastructure grants to connect anchor institutions to new or improved broadband Internet facilities (NTIA, n.d.). The North Florida

Broadband Authority (NFBA) and Florida Rural Broadband Alliance (FRBA) each received over \$20 million in BTOP funds to build middle mile networks in rural Florida. In support of these projects, the study team at the Information Use Management and Policy Institute (Information Institute) conducted broadband needs assessments for anchor institutions in these rural regions.




What is a middle mile network?


A middle mile network connects the core network to the local network (e.g., at the Internet Service Provider, or ISP).


However, a middle mile network does not directly connect the end user to broadband Internet.

Florida's Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern

The NFBA and FRBA have a mandate to build middle mile broadband infrastructure that will provide access to broadband service in rural and underserved Florida communities.

 is a government entity covering the North Florida region.

 is a regional collaboration of local governments, community activists, and economic development agencies from rural and economically disadvantaged communities in Northwest and South Central Florida.

 *The City of Immokalee in Collier County is part of FRBA, but the rest of the county is not.

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Understanding Anchor Institution Broadband Needs

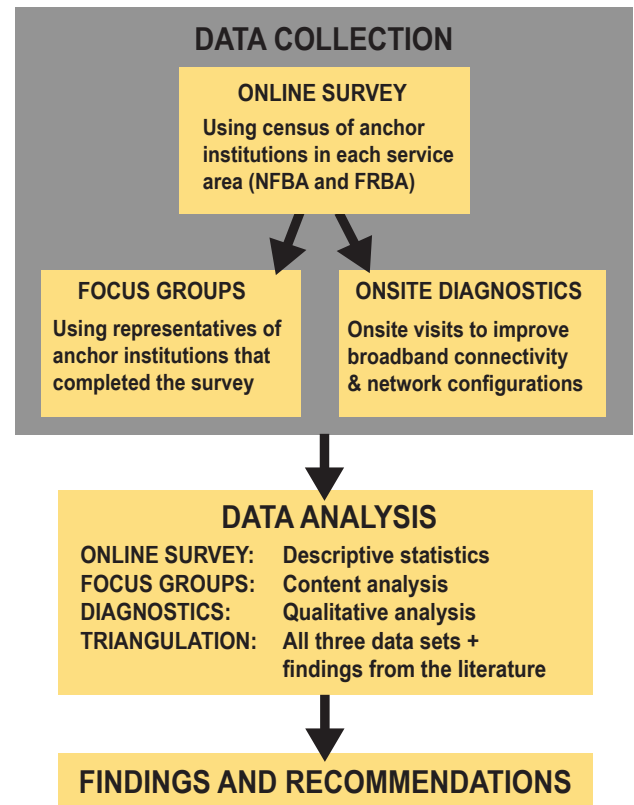
Research finds that inefficient and poorly designed network configurations severely compromise the speed and quality of many anchor institutions' broadband services. Also, many staff members do not know the speed or quality of their front door broadband connections and do not understand the ways in which speed to the workstation can be degraded (McClure, Mandel, Snead, Bishop, & Ryan, 2009). This project seeks to (1) increase knowledge of anchor institutions' broadband connections, network configurations, and ways in which they can be improved; (2) understand staff training needs in areas such as broadband networks, network deployment, and broadband-enabled applications; and (3) develop metrics for diagnostic evaluations of anchor institutions' Internet network deployment and configurations.

Quick Facts About Rural Anchors

There are 67 counties in Florida
About half are rural

There are 10,000+ anchor institutions in Florida
Fewer than 1,000 of these
are in NFBA and FRBA

Multi-Method Approach



Anchor Institution Types

- City / county government
- Emergency management
- Federally qualified health clinics
- First responders
- Higher education
- Hospitals
- Libraries
- Museums
- Public schools
- Rural health clinics
- School district offices
- Workforce boards

References

- McClure, C. R., Mandel, L. H., Snead, J. T., Bishop, B. W., & Ryan, J. (2009). *Needs assessment of Florida public library e-government and emergency management broadband services*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University, College of Communication & Information, Information Use Management & Policy Institute.
- National Telecommunications and Information Administration. (n.d.). *About*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved September 9, 2010, from <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/about>

To learn more about this research project:

Alemanne, N. D., Mandel, L. H., & McClure, C. R. (in press). The rural public library as leader in community broadband services. *Library Technology Reports*. Preprint available:
http://mcclure.ii.fsu.edu/publications/2011/Broadband_and_Rural_Libraries_Preprint_Jun7_11.pdf
Project websites - <http://nfba.ii.fsu.edu> and <http://frba.ii.fsu.edu>

The Information Institute gratefully acknowledges the focus group participants and the support of the anchor institutions in the North Central, Northwest, and South Central RACECs.

This research is funded through grants from the North Florida Broadband Authority (NFBA) and Florida Rural Broadband Alliance, which have a mandate to build middle mile broadband infrastructure that will provide access to broadband service in rural and underserved Florida communities.

Preliminary findings and possible responses continue to be under analysis and will be updated in the future.