**This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/2021/11/first-friday-broadband-access-in-kansas.html**

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**Speaker outlines prospects for broadband growth in Kansas**

Adams says money is coming during K-State’s First Friday series

MANHATTAN, Kan. — The director of the Kansas Department of Commerce’s broadband development office said funding to improve Internet connectivity across Kansas is likely coming, and communities should be ready to take advantage of those opportunities.

Stanley Adams was the featured speaker Nov. 5 during K-State Research and Extension’s monthly online series, First Friday e-Calls, which helps to nurture small businesses and inspire entrepreneurship in Kansas.

Adams told the gathering of nearly 50 people that the challenge of broadband connectivity – especially in rural areas of Kansas – “is real.”

“As you all most likely know, broadband has become a very important topic in our state,” he said. “And in our office, it was an important topic even before the pandemic. There was a lot of effort on our part to expand broadband across Kansas.”

Adams said that a goal for broadband in the state is for communities to have access to Internet that provides upload and download speeds of 100 megabytes per second. That threshold, however, is quickly becoming a minimum standard, and he’d really like to see speeds of 1 gigabyte per second across Kansas.

Data currently available indicates that just 80% of Kansans have access to upload speeds of 100 megabytes of data per second, and download speeds of 20 megabytes per second.

“The remaining 20% is in rural areas and under-served or not-served communities,” Adams said, “and that’s primarily due to the costs of broadband infrastructure.”

In real numbers, Adams said more than 280,000 locations in Kansas are estimated to need upgrades to the 100 megabyte level.

“In our modern world, access to broadband is not a luxury,” Adams said. “It’s a necessity.”
He said numerous grant programs can help Kansas communities close the digital divides that exist.

One program – Broadband Acceleration Grants – was established in fall, 2020 to spur access across the state. The program is for 10 years and will invest $85 million in matching grant funds for the state’s broadband infrastructure.

One round of acceleration grants has been awarded; in March, 2021, 2500 Kansas locations shared $5 million to help build their local networks. Adams said another round of funding opportunities is expected to be announced soon.

According to Adams, funds are also available to Kansas communities through other programs, including:

- The Broadband Partnership Adoption Grant
- The Connectivity Emergency Response Grant
- The National Telecommunications and Information Administration Broadband Infrastructure Program

More information about grant opportunities available to Kansas communities is available online from the Kansas Department of Commerce’s Office of Broadband Development.

“There is a pipeline of funding (for broadband infrastructure) coming; we are pretty confident that there will be additional opportunities that will be specific for Kansas,” Adams said. “What I think is most important for (entrepreneurs and community planners) to do is to engage with local communities to identify and plan for those opportunities. Be prepared regarding what you need so that you are ready when the funding becomes available. We can help facilitate those conversations as needed.”

Adams’ full talk and other First Friday presentations are available online from K-State Research and Extension.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
K-State Research and Extension First Friday e-Calls, www.ksre.ks-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship

Kansas Department of Commerce Office of Broadband Development, https://www.kansascommerce.gov/broadband

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