

Missouri 4-H Youth Voices on Rural Broadband

Missouri 4-H Legislative Academy —February 19-21, 2018



Introduction

Rural broadband was selected as the focal point for the 2018 Missouri 4-H Legislative Academy. Fourteen 4-H youth delegates ages 15-18 from across the state were selected through a competitive application process to attend the Academy, having earned the opportunity through achieving a number of leadership and citizenship milestones in 4-H.

In preparation for the Academy, 4-H youth delegates were oriented to the rural broadband issue by state leaders from Missouri Farm Bureau, Missouri Department of Agriculture, and Missouri Department of Economic Development. Delegates also researched the issue and gathered feedback from local peers in their communities.

At the 4-H Legislative Academy, Feb. 19-21, youth delegates asked questions of legislative leaders to learn more about the topic and what is being done in Missouri. Delegates were organized into three groups by geographic residence to brainstorm ideas and summarize findings, and to deliver group presentations to rural broadband stakeholders at the conclusion of the 4-H Legislative Academy.

Below are group findings, conclusions, and ideas on how Missouri 4-H youth can help drive progress on the rural broadband issue in their communities.

The Problem

Many Missourians do not have internet access where they live. In areas that do have connection, the internet is slow and unreliable.

The Opportunities

If rural broadband expands across Missouri, many opportunities would be opened up to the state's citizens:

- **Academics**—students would be able to better upload homework, complete school work, research colleges and careers, and apply for scholarships online
- **Communications**—all community residents would be better able to connect and network with those in the community and beyond
- **Entrepreneurship**—entrepreneurs and business owners would be able to start or expand online businesses, solicit more business, and improve marketing
- **Cultural Literacy**—all community residents would have more options for streaming and downloading media for cultural, educational, and entertainment purposes

The Ideas

4-H members explored solutions to bringing high-speed, affordable internet to all, including:

- Starting petitions to build evidence of support
- Taking advantage of grants to fund hotspots
- Increasing the number of small towers across Missouri
- Linking phone companies to form a dependable local or regional service provider
- Providing benefits for companies that offer hotspots



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The Actions

Missouri 4-Hers explored ways they could help raise awareness or be a part of the solution, including:

- Educate peers, adults and local leaders about broadband.
- Present workshops at 4-H conferences and events.
- Call for Missouri 4-Hers to share stories and testimony.
- Reach out to lawmakers to share opinions and ask support.
- Partner with local entities to develop plan of action.
- Expand upon the idea of “community learning days.”

4-H clubs are comprised of local youth ages 5-18 who are excited about serving and bringing positive change to their communities, and are connected to resources through Missouri’s land-grant university and the nationwide Cooperative Extension System.



The Messages

4-H youth delegates wish to share a few messages about rural broadband with leaders and elected officials:

- **Broadband affects everyone in the State of Missouri, whether they have internet access or not.**
- **Limited connectivity puts 4-H members and many other students across the state at a disadvantage for uploading homework, completing schoolwork, and filling out online scholarship and college applications.**
- **A lack of fast, reliable internet in rural areas hinders innovation, entrepreneurship, and industry from bringing prosperous jobs and careers to communities.**
- **Broadband is essential to the advancement of small, rural communities in Missouri, to create places where young people can stay and contribute, or come back to live, work, and raise a family.**



4-H Youth Voice Contributors

- **Academy Youth Delegates**
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- **For more information, visit 4h.missouri.edu.**



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