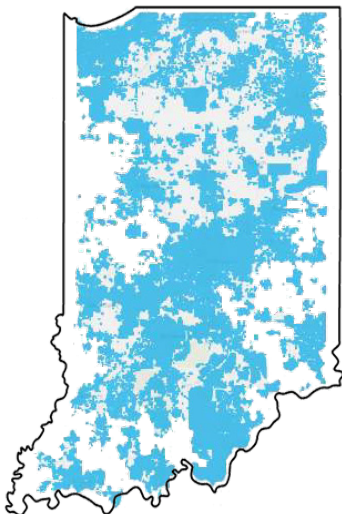


# Broadband access, quality, and affordability for Indiana residents



Public libraries are often the only point of access for broadband, day or night.



[indianabroadbandmap.com](http://indianabroadbandmap.com)

The pandemic underscores the essential need for statewide broadband for a thriving economy, an educated and connected workforce, and a healthy citizenry. Access to high-speed internet is critical for student success, skilling up in employment, completing e-government transactions, telehealth and legal appointments, and more. Increasingly, residents require internet access an essential utility.

## What are the issues?

Libraries and schools provide access to the internet at their locations and through lending of hotspots as a stopgap measure while broadband is built out. The State Budget includes a line item to reimburse libraries for partial costs of internet connectivity, and the Indiana State Library has maxed out this fund every year—even before the pandemic.

Advocates differ on the exact number of Hoosiers without access. For example, certain reporting organizations will count an area if only one household in a Census tract has access to broadband, which unfortunately minimizes the perception of need. Rural residents especially experience the discrepancy between reported coverage and actual access.

Indiana's libraries are on the front lines of educating Hoosiers of all ages about the internet and ways to access it at home safely. Senior citizens, in particular, may not understand that broadband access provides more than access to email—that it is the future access for educational attainment, telehealth, and aging at home.

## What is Indiana Library Federation's position?

Indiana Library Federation advocates expansion of broadband to the areas of the state still unserved and underserved, increased quality of broadband services, and increased affordability. ILF seeks continued stable funding in the State Budget for internet connectivity for libraries—especially with the move to remote work and eLearning during the pandemic.

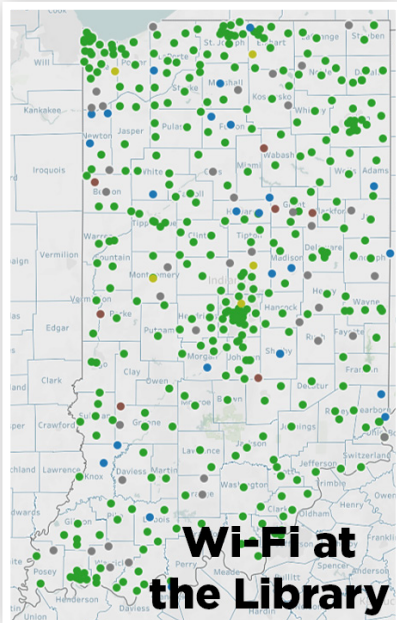
## What is the potential impact?

Expanding broadband will foster retention of young professionals and spur economic development in rural communities. Broadband access will improve education, economic and health access for residents. Increasing affordability will level the playing field, providing fair access to economic and educational resources for individuals and families.

## Ways Indiana's Libraries help fill the Broadband Gap

Indiana's public, school, and academic libraries work to fill the gap in broadband access.

- Public Libraries offer free wired and Wi-Fi internet access to anyone who comes in. Libraries have increased the reach and hours of their Wi-Fi to provide access beyond their normal hours of operation. During the pandemic, over 375 library branches extended Wi-Fi to their parking lots for safe access. Mobile hotspots and devices are provided for checkout and are some of the most frequently loaned items.
- Academic libraries in the public institutions provide public access to their computers and internet.
- School libraries often extend their hours so that students assigned homework requiring access to the internet may complete their homework in the school library before or after school or during lunch. Some school libraries designate open hours after school. School librarians teach digital literacy and are instrumental in 1:1 device support.



## Digital Literacy is Key to Broadband Adoption

Helping residents understand how to access and navigate the internet safely is critically important to broadband expansion. Some residents may be technology-hesitant. As trusted resources, library staff provide one-on-one and group tutorials on a range of digital literacies, including how to use the internet safely, how to communicate over the internet through email and online meetings, and how to evaluate information on the internet.

### Libraries Transform® Indiana

Indiana Library Federation believes that libraries, with all of their modern amenities and innovations, are a smart investment, with the potential to transform communities and create a passion for lifelong learning.

#### Our approach to advocacy

- Indiana Library Federation is a statewide nonprofit association that is dedicated to advancing library services for the benefit of Indiana residents.
- Indiana Library Federation is nonpartisan and reflects the core values of the library field, including lifelong learning, freedom of ideas and civil discourse.
- Indiana Library Federation monitors public policies that affect all types of libraries and the people who work in and support them. ILF engages its members and stakeholders to be positioned for action in library advocacy.

### Indiana's public libraries by the numbers\*

**236** public libraries   **426** library branches   **25** bookmobiles  
**85,016** children's programs   **2,186,889** children's program attendance  
**13,474** young adult programs   **149,778** total programs  
**3,280,838** total program attendance   **30,836,051** total library visits per year

