2023

REGIONAL RURAL BROADBAND FORUM

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 2023
CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

25 YEARS 1995–2020
RMC
Rural Maryland Council

USDA
Rural Development

Welcome to the 2023 Regional Rural Broadband

Dear Attendees,

It is our sincere pleasure to welcome you to the 2023 Regional Rural Broadband Forum. The Rural Maryland Council and the USDA Rural Development are proud to partner together to host today's forum as internet access continues to be a top priority for many rural residents.

In 2017, we successfully hosted a similar forum that resulted in the development of the Office of Rural Broadband and the Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless, and Cellular Service. While these two administrations have been instrumental in improving access to broadband services there is still work to be done, especially considering the recent COVID pandemic. Today's Forum will address the next steps that our region must take to ensure universal broadband service to all households in Maryland and will cover topics from asset deployment to adoption and digital equity.

Please enjoy today's knowledgeable speakers and engaging breakout sessions. We encourage you to take the time to connect and collaborate with fellow attendees as working together, is the best way to improve broadband access across our region.

Sincerely,

David Baker
State Director for Delaware and Maryland
USDA Rural Development

Susan O'Neill
Executive Board Chair
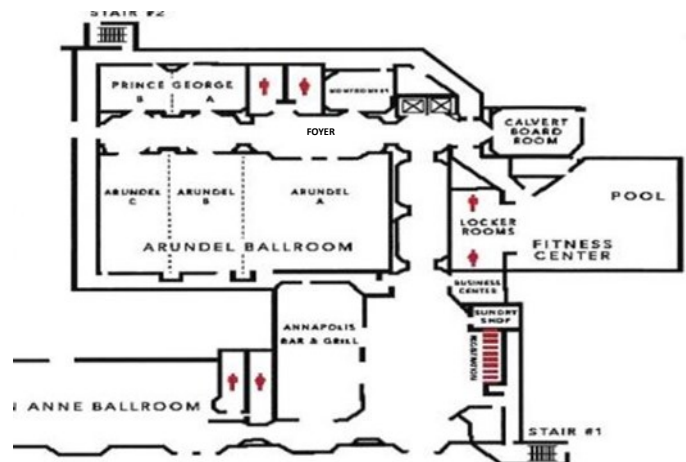Rural Maryland Council

Navigating the Forum

All sessions will take place on the ground floor of the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Please refer to this map to learn where your session will be held.

Food and beverages will be available in the foyer between the Arundel Ballroom and Prince George meeting room.

Open wi-fi: Crowne Meeting (does not require a password)
Alternate wi-fi: CrownePlaza_meeting
Password: Crowne173

2023 Regional Rural Broadband Forum

Wednesday June 21, 2023 │ 8:00am to 2:00pm │ Crowne Plaza Annapolis — Annapolis, MD

8:00am to 8:30am	Registration and Continental Breakfast (Foyer)
8:30am to 8:35am	**Forum Opening** Official opening of the 2023 Regional Rural Broadband Forum. Susan O'Neill, Chair – Rural Maryland Council David Baker, State Director – USDA Rural Development
8:35am to 9:00am	**Welcome Address** Introductory remarks from State and Industry Experts on broadband efforts from across the state. Sheree Sample-Hughes, Speaker Pro Tem – Maryland House of Delegates Jake Day, Secretary – Housing & Community Development Stephen Alexander, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer – Ciena
9:00am to 10:00am	**Plenary Session: Broadband Mapping and Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (B.E.A.D.)** Update from the Office of Statewide Broadband, National Telecommunications and Information Administration Maryland Federal Office, and the Delaware Department of Technology and Information Kenrick Gordon, Director – Office of Statewide Broadband Michael Paroby, Maryland Federal Officer – National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Marcia Jones, Senior Project Management Specialist – Delaware Department of Technology and Information
10:00am to 10:15am	Move to Breakout Session A or B
10:15am to 11:15am	<u>Session A</u>: **Digital Inclusion – Case Studies and Best Practices** (Arundel Ballroom) <u>Session B</u>: **Broadband Expansion Incentives** (Prince George Room)
11:15am to 11:30am	Move to Breakout Session C or D
11:30am to 12:30pm	<u>Session C</u>: **Affordability – Affordable Connectivity Program** (Arundel Ballroom) <u>Session D</u>: **Barriers to Deployment** (Prince George Room)
12:30pm to 1:00pm	*Pick Up Boxed Lunch in the Foyer & Move to the Arundel Ballroom for a Working Lunch*
1:05pm to 1:25pm	**Plenary Session: Funding Rural Broadband Initiatives** Highlighting federal funding resources available for rural broadband initiatives. Richard Jenkins, Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service – USDA Rural Development Adam Scavette, Regional Economist – Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
1:30pm to 1:55pm	**Keynote Address – *Joanne Hovis, President, CTC Technology & Energy*** CTC specializes in public broadband initiatives, from conducting initial feasibility studies to preparing network designs to recommending guidelines for network operations. They conduct statistically valid market research, lead community discussion groups, facilitate outreach to wired and wireless service providers, and perform detailed needs assessments of key stakeholders. CTC is currently preparing the State's plans for use of the IIJA broadband funds. Introduction by Johnny Mautz, Senator – Maryland State Senate
1:55pm to 2:00pm	**Forum Closing** Closing the 2023 Regional Rural Broadband Forum with a call to action to work together to increase rural broadband access across the region. Charlotte Davis, Executive Director – Rural Maryland Council

Morning Plenary Session

Broadband Mapping and Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (B.E.A.D.)

In order to shape government policies around internet access, accurate data collection and analysis are incredibly important. This session covers the challenges and opportunities involved in mapping the areas of our region and the tools available to gather and visualize this information.

Breakout Sessions

Session A: Digital Inclusion – Case Studies and Best Practices
Breakout Room: Arundel Ballroom

The main objective of this roundtable is to look at a broader definition of digital equity and digital literacy while diving into the deeper question of "What does it mean to be digitally literate?" The discussion will continue into what efforts are currently underway and where the future may lead with digital inclusion in our evolving era of development.

Moderator: Charlotte Davis, Executive Director – Rural Maryland Council
Panelists: Mega Subramaniam, Professor and Associate Dean of Faculty – College of Information Studies, University of Maryland; Jinhee Kim, Ph.D., Professor, Associate Dean and Associate Director –University of Maryland Extension; Isaias Tesfalidet, Project Director, Digital Literacy – University of Maryland Extension

Session B: Broadband Expansion Incentives
Breakout Room: Prince George Room

The Governor of Maryland introduced legislation during the recently concluded Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session to incentivize the expansion of broadband. This session will explore the various incentives and strategies for expanding broadband access in underserved communities. The discussion will cover tax credits, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing models.

Moderator: Tyler Patton, Director of State Government – Verizon
Panelists: Drew Van Dopp, President & CEO - Maryland Broadband Cooperative; Mike Romano, Executive Vice President – NTCA.

Session C: Affordability – Affordable Connectivity Program
Breakout Room: Arundel Ballroom

This session will dive into the logistics of the Affordable Connectivity Program and how the program operates. From there, the panel will analyze who primarily has been using the under-utilized program and how we can improve its effectiveness for those in rural communities.

Moderator: Senator Sarah Elfreth
Panelists: Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman**,** Tami Watkins, Director for Government & Regulatory Affairs – Comcast; Ronnie Hammond, Program Manager, Digital, Equity & Inclusion – Office of Statewide Broadband, Maryland.

Session D: Barriers to Deployment
Breakout Room: Prince George Room
This session will bring together multiple stakeholders to discuss the day-to-day challenges of deploying broadband throughout the state. From eminent domain to training and finding workers, this roundtable looks to dive deep into the obstacles at hand and how to mitigate them.

Moderator: Kenrick Gordon, Director – Office of Statewide Broadband, Maryland.
Panelists: Brad Fallon, Deputy Legislative Officer for the Governor's Office of Wes Moore; Tim McGaha, Vice President of Technical Services – Choptank Electric Cooperative; DeeAnna Sobczak, Financial Manager –Think Big

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Afternoon Plenary Session

Funding and Financing Rural Broadband Initiatives
This session will dive into various funding opportunities available for rural areas to improve their broadband infrastructure. We will explore federal programs and learn about eligibility requirements, application processes and best practices to secure funding.

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Keynote Speaker
Joanne Hovis, President, CTC Technology & Energy

Joanne Hovis is a recognized authority on broadband markets and on the evolving role of public –private partnerships in the provision of communications services to the public. For more than 20 years, she has directed CTC's consulting services related to strategic planning, market analysis, business modeling, and financial analysis for localities, states, and tribal governments nationwide. Joanne leads the CTC teams that advise or have advised the states of Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, and Vermont; the cities of Atlanta, Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.; and the statewide broadband networks in Colorado, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

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Thank you for attending the 2023 Regional Rural Broadband Forum. Please take a moment to complete the event evaluation survey – your feedback is important to us. Any PowerPoint presentation used during today's forum will be available online after the event. All attendees can expect to receive an email with a link to the presentations.

**To Learn More about RMC visit
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