



**Contact:**

**Chairman Andrew Wheeler**

Email: [awheeler@k3county.net](mailto:awheeler@k3county.net)

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

## **Kankakee County Selected for Accelerate Illinois Broadband Infrastructure Planning Program**

**Kankakee, Illinois** — In an effort to deliver broadband service to the rural areas of the County, Kankakee County has been approved as a new partner in the Accelerate Illinois Broadband Infrastructure Planning Program.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (IDCEO) created the program to help communities leverage broadband infrastructure funding for community-driven broadband expansion and public-private partnership. The program features a 14-week community engagement program with expert support to help prepare communities for upgrades.

Kankakee County applied for the grant in December of 2021 highlighting the critical need in the underserved rural areas. The county's team for the program will consist of representatives from around the county, representing key segments that include local government, education, farming, workforce, and economic/community development.

"This is a significant step forward in delivering stable, high-speed broadband internet service to our rural residents," said Kankakee County Chairman Andy Wheeler. "From Essex to Hopkins Park, from rural Grant Park to Reddick and Buckingham, our rural residents deserve to be connected to infrastructure that those in the metro areas take for granted. Kids deserve to be able to remain connected to school remotely, and our workforce deserves to be able to work from home. The significant GDP increase in the farming sector from rural broadband is yet another reason to begin this planning process."

"The American Rescue Act provides broadband funding opportunities that have not existed in the past," added Wheeler. "This planning process will give us an indication of how many rural residents can be served, as well as the cost of building the infrastructure to supply the service. County Board member and Farm Bureau Manager

Chad Miller will lead the County team with Ben Wilson (Transportation and Economic Development), and they will join representatives from rural areas across the County.

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Kankakee County operates under the township form of government, and is the governing body for Kankakee County outside of municipal jurisdictions. For more information on Kankakee County, visit <https://www.k3county.net/>. Please note that the following information is strictly a news release. We do not wish to pay for publication.