

Champaign County Broadband Advocate

Increasing the availability and affordability of fast, reliable broadband internet in the rural areas of Champaign County is of utmost importance to the Champaign County Farm Bureau (CCFB). The CCFB proposes that Champaign County contract the CCFB to act as the Broadband Advocate to educate the public about and develop support for potential broadband projects throughout Champaign County.

The two-year goal of the CCFB's Broadband Advocacy would be to increase the availability of reliable and affordable internet in the unserved and underserved areas of Champaign County, by collaborating with taxing-bodies, civic and community-based organizations, and ISP's to support projects and grant proposals that meet the needs of residents.

As the Broadband Advocate, the CCFB would:

Meetings:

- Hold public meetings to gather the public's input on broadband projects in rural Champaign County
- Discuss the status of and gain the support for potential broadband projects with taxing bodies, civic organizations, rural businesses, and community groups

Electronic Media:

- Develop and maintain a website that will educate the public about broadband issues in Champaign County
- Develop and disseminate an email newsletter regarding the status of potential broadband projects in Champaign County
- Develop a social media presence that attracts followers, keeping them informed of the latest developments on broadband service in Champaign County.
- Develop short video segments that can be shared through e-mail, social media or placed on a website that engages residents, taxing bodies and civic groups in the ongoing efforts.

Easement and Drainage issues:

- Serve as a key resource for landowners as issues arise surrounding installation of broadband service in the county
- Collect appropriate information regarding drainage law and the role of district commissioners to ensure cooperation
- Build a network of local attorneys who have agricultural practice experience who can assist landowners with the easement process

Collaboration & Coordination efforts:

- Develop and maintain a database of community members interested in broadband projects
- Coordinate with ISPs to ensure that all parts of rural Champaign County are being served by potential broadband projects
- Collaborate with existing utility providers to ensure that potential broadband projects will not impact their services
- Solicit letters of support from taxing bodies, community groups, rural businesses, and civic organizations for grants for potential broadband projects
- Coordinate with ISPs to provide community support for potential grants

Volunteers:

- Recruit and train volunteers for the above tasks

The CCFB is uniquely suited to accomplish these tasks in the rural areas of Champaign County. The CCFB's connections with rural taxing bodies, community members, and businesses are unmatched; when those connections are combined with the CCFB's understanding of landowner issues surrounding the installation of broadband service, it becomes readily apparent that the CCFB is the only organization in Champaign County that can effectively advocate for broadband solutions in rural Champaign County.

Proposed Budget:

- Meetings - **\$5,500**
- Electronic media - **\$8,750**
- Drainage/easements - **\$2,250**
- Volunteers - **\$5,750**
- Collaboration and Coordination efforts - **\$4,800**
- Administration - **\$4,700**
- **TOTAL - \$31,750**