



# BRIDGING IOWA'S DIGITAL DIVIDE

*Taylor Teepell, Lumen Technologies. Photo by Duane Tinkey*



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**Iowa Association of  
 Business and Industry**

The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) is the voice of Iowa business. It is Iowa's oldest and largest business network, representing 1,500 businesses that employ more than 333,000 Iowans. ABI benefits members by advocating on their behalf at the statehouse, connecting them with decision-makers to share ideas and services, offering solutions and best practices for issues that affect their businesses and developing our state's business and civic leaders.

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**Membership Development Services**  
 Gary Nash, Kerry Servas

**Iowa Association of Business and Industry**  
 400 East Court Avenue, Suite 100  
 Des Moines, IA 50309  
 515-280-8000 or 800-383-4224  
 Email: [abi@iowaabi.org](mailto:abi@iowaabi.org)  
 Web: [www.iowaabi.org](http://www.iowaabi.org)

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**A VIEW FROM THE TOP**

**Broadband Access is Important to  
 ABI Members**



**Steven M. Bradford**  
*ABI Chair  
 HNI Corporation  
 Muscatine*

Each year at this time, ABI is heavily focused on advancing sound public policy in conjunction with the Iowa General Assembly. ABI members take seriously the hard work done by the governor and legislators, and we look forward to the conclusion of what can be a very productive session.

As for this month's news magazine, the cover story looks at one of the issues ABI members identified last fall as a priority for Iowa: broadband access. The good news is that the governor and legislators have also identified this as an important issue. As this publication goes to press, the final outcome of proposals to address the issue are not known, but some type of action is expected.

Finally, I would note that there is great excitement around the 2021 Taking Care of Business Conference, ABI's 118th annual convention. That event will be held in Coralville/Iowa City on June 8-10. Please go to [www.ABITakingCareOfBusiness.com](http://www.ABITakingCareOfBusiness.com) for more information.

The hospitality, speakers, venues and networking at the conference are the very best you will find anywhere in the state. If you and your team attend only one event this year, this is the one that will give you the best return on your investment in terms of time, money and resources. I look forward to seeing you and your coworkers in June.

As always, thank you for your support! ■

**CAPITOL BUSINESS**



**Key ABI Priority Advances:  
 Robust High Speed  
 Broadband Deployment**

As the second legislative funnel has passed, limiting the subjects that can be considered for the rest of the 2021 legislative session, the House, the Senate and the Governor are united in their efforts to expand access to broadband and increase available speeds of service. The details and the spending levels for the effort must be coordinated with all parties to deliver a consensus plan. The Governor was bold in her rollout of a 3 year \$450 million dollar grant program to incentivize high speed internet deployment at speeds of 100bps for uploads and downloads. This will not just catch Iowa up to the progress being made in other states for internet infrastructure, it will leapfrog Iowa to a position of leadership in high speed internet services. This will be critical as the "internet of things" is normalized in advanced manufacturing. Already the equipment on the factory floor of many Iowa manufacturers is interconnected via broadband. Lasers exchange data with benders and 3-d printers. Production robots are communicating with delivery robots, preventative maintenance is scheduled relying on data collected related to machine performance.

The House and Senate have responded to the Governor's policy introduction and are also taking

important steps to ensure that no area of Iowa is left behind in deployment of basic internet services. What remains are decisions on spending levels and the ultimate speed of the broadband deployed to meet high speed needs. The Iowa House has passed HF848 which will allocate \$100 million in each of the next three years for high speed broadband deployment. Eighty percent of the grants will support the high 100x100 upload and download speeds while 20 percent will be reserved for difficult to serve areas with 100 bps download and 20 bps upload speeds.

This bill will serve as the template for all remaining decisions. ABI staff will be representing our broadband customer members to maximize funding and speed so that Iowa can lead in advanced manufacturing and grow and attract manufacturers that will create wealth in Iowa for all Iowans.

For more on this issue please contact the ABI public policy team:

- JD Davis; Vice President, Public Policy [jddavis@iowaabi.org](mailto:jddavis@iowaabi.org); 515-979-1212
- Brad Hartkopf; Director, Public Policy [bhartkopf@iowaabi.org](mailto:bhartkopf@iowaabi.org); 712-249-8589 ■



**JD Davis**  
*Vice President,  
 Public Policy, ABI  
[jddavis@iowaabi.org](mailto:jddavis@iowaabi.org)*



CULTIVATING IOWA'S TALENT CONTINUUM

# Take Action: Recognize Leaders in Your Company and Community



**McKenzie Kielman**  
Marketing & Engagement Coordinator  
ABI Foundation  
mkielman@iowaabi.org

The ABI Foundation is sending out the call to nominate current and emerging Iowa leaders to participate in statewide educational leadership programs.

Take a moment to think back to the first time that you were recognized as a leader.

While the answer varies as we recall different ages and stages in life—from hall monitors to sports captains to management positions—the process likely started with an advocate saying “this is who will step up.”

We invite you to recognize leaders and be recognized as a leader in Iowa! You can be the leader who ensures your area of the state is represented as we seek involvement from all 99 counties this year.

Consider friends, family, neighbors, colleagues and others who should be connected to each of our statewide educational leadership programs. More about these opportunities:

**Nominate a professional and community leader for Leadership Iowa**

Leadership Iowa is designed as a professional immersion to encourage Iowa leaders in their development and involvement. As our state’s premier issues-awareness program, participants are given the opportunity for first-hand exposure and in-depth examination of the challenges and opportunities facing our communities in Iowa. With their new statewide perspective and network, they are better equipped to continue and expand their work in organizations and communities across Iowa.

Nominate leaders in your network now or before May 1 to be considered for the upcoming class at [www.LeadershipIowa.com](http://www.LeadershipIowa.com).

**Nominate a college student or intern for Leadership Iowa University**

Leadership Iowa University is a college internship capstone connecting our state’s next decision makers with tools for professional and personal success. Participants expand their network and are exposed to the variety of opportunities right here in Iowa. The connections made throughout the week with professionals, as well as the relationships built with one another, has a lasting impact on how they make their decisions about what’s ahead.

Nominate or encourage college students or interns in Iowa to apply now or before July 12 at [www.LeadershipIowaUniversity.com](http://www.LeadershipIowaUniversity.com).

**Nominate a high school student for Business Horizons**

Business Horizons is an innovation simulation for Iowa high school students (grades 9-12) to get a better sense of how their strengths and skills can benefit themselves and others, now and in the future. Put into teams, students take an idea from inception to investor pitch and develop a solution to a real-world problem. The week is filled with competitions, development workshops, keynote speakers, ‘after-hour’ activities and more! Participants go on to their next steps feeling confident about the future.

Nominate or encourage Iowa high school students to apply now or before July 1 at [www.BusinessHorizonsIowa.com](http://www.BusinessHorizonsIowa.com).

With last year being one unlike any other, we have the vision to make this one exceptional! It’s our mission to reach all Iowans and all communities in each corner of our state. We appreciate your help in supporting our state’s current and emerging leaders!

Take action by nominating at [www.IowaABIFoundation.org](http://www.IowaABIFoundation.org) under “Get Involved.” ■



Most recent graduates of the Leadership Iowa program, the Class of 2019-20.



Leadership Iowa University 2019 college program participants.



High school student participants of Business Horizons 2019.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

# Applying Risk Management Strategies to Succession Planning



**Jack Carra**  
Senior Vice President  
LMC Insurance & Risk  
Management, an  
AssuredPartners agency

At some point, an individual performing a critical role within your business will inevitably leave. When this happens, it's essential to minimize the amount of time the role is vacant.

Managing business succession has traditionally meant that specific individuals are identified for specific roles. Once identified, those individuals receive the appropriate training so they can step into their new roles when the time comes.

But what if you approached succession as an exercise in risk mitigation—going beyond the act of identifying and preparing individuals to take over? Called succession risk management, the aim is to ensure that inevitable vacancies in critical roles have minimal negative impact on the business.

At least twice a year—and any time there are significant changes in the work, business or workforce—your company's leadership team should discuss:

1. The work that needs to be undertaken, the types of roles critical to this work and the company, and the workforce's potential to undertake these roles.
2. What might happen when critical roles need filling in the future (taking into account the potential of the internal workforce and external labor market).
3. What risks are likely to occur and how should they be prioritized.
4. What can be done to minimize the risk of these scenarios occurring or the impacts if they do occur.

Further, it's important to reassess the risks regularly to determine whether your mitigation strategies are still effective and appropriate.

Risks stem from the misalignment of roles, skills, time, expectations and support. An important aspect of the risk management process addresses how roles are designed and what the experience is like when moving into and working in a critical role.

Succession risk management is a critical component of strategic and workforce planning. Based on defined criteria and employee input, it requires an objective assessment, free from discriminatory bias. Done effectively, it ensures the business will have the future leadership, management and technical capacity it needs. ■

In Iowa, big ideas flourish. We invest in bold visionaries and innovative ideas that transform industries. From start-ups to enterprises, we're home to rewarding careers in advanced manufacturing, bioscience and finance. And never ones to forget our roots, Iowa's leadership in agriculture continues with breakthroughs in digital and precision ag. Opportunities are everywhere in Iowa. If you belong on the leading edge of your industry, you're in the right place. Learn more at [IowaEDA.com](http://IowaEDA.com).

**IOWA**  
economic development





# BRIDGING IOWA'S DIGITAL DIVIDE

PHOTO BY DUANE TINKEY

BY GIGI WOOD

## Working remotely and schooling from home during the pandemic in 2020 highlighted the need for improved broadband internet access.

Iowa ranks 45th in the nation in broadband access and has the second-slowest internet speed nationwide, with an average download speed of 78.9 megabits per second, according to BroadbandNow.com. High-speed internet is rarely offered throughout much of the state and only 18.5% of Iowans have access to affordable internet plans, which is below the national average of 50.1%, according to Gov. Kim Reynolds' office.

In December, the Federal Communications Commission awarded \$143 million to 11 broadband providers in Iowa through the Digital Opportunity Fund Phase 1 Auction, a federal program focused on increasing broadband access. Nearly all rural locations eligible for the award will receive broadband at download speeds of 100 Mbps and about 85% of eligible locations will receive gigabit service, according to the FCC. To be considered broadband, a connection must have a download speed of at least 25 Mbps and minimum upload speeds of 3 Mbps. About 35% of Iowa households lack this 25/3 benchmark for broadband speed, according to the governor's office.

Earlier in 2020, Reynolds funneled \$50 million in CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act funding to improving connectivity in the state. As part of her 2021 legislative priorities, Reynolds proposed a \$450 million investment by the state to improve broadband access. The program would incentivize private providers to invest in broadband infrastructure, to be partially repaid by grant funding.

### ADVANCING THE WAY WE LIVE AND WORK

Lumen Technologies has invested more than \$2.7 billion in broadband infrastructure in Iowa cumulatively and now operates more than 450,000 connections and nearly 9,000 fiber route miles throughout every region of the state.

"Connectivity is obviously critical, and this past year has shown that to all of us," said Taylor Teepell, director of government affairs and public policy for Lumen Technologies (formerly CenturyLink).

Improving broadband access for rural Iowa, while important, has been cost prohibitive for private providers to take on alone.

"The challenge that exists out there is this large rural area that historically has been uneconomic to serve. These are expensive technologies," Teepell said.

He said the governor's broadband initiative is a tangible step forward. The move could not only improve connectivity infrastruc-

ture but strengthen economic development in Iowa.

"I think that what you're seeing is real leadership by the governor and the Legislature and state leaders, who are continuing to drive really smart policy that is beneficial to businesses in general," he said. "What they're pursuing right now with this broadband grant program that the governor has proposed, and that the Legislature is working through right now, is extremely aggressive in a positive manner. I would say it is one of the most aggressive programs being presented in the country and will be a game changer for the state of Iowa. It is going to drive investment into these areas that historically the business case didn't exist to be able to get down to those really, really high-cost areas."

Teepell said Lumen Technologies is committed to continuing to invest in Iowa's broadband infrastructure.

### RURAL BROADBAND A CRITICAL NEED

Another connectivity provider, AT&T, has also invested significantly in Iowa's infrastructure. According to Dustin Blythe, director of external affairs for AT&T Services in Iowa and Nebraska, the company has invested nearly \$110 million in Iowa in capital expenditures between 2017 and 2019. Nationally, AT&T invested more than \$105 billion from 2015 to 2020 in wireless connectivity.

"AT&T wants to credit Iowa policymakers for the steps they've taken to create a positive environment for investment," Blythe said. "In 2015, legislation supporting macro towers to support our wireless network was enacted. Then, in 2017, the Legislature passed legislation allowing for a statewide regulatory framework for the deployment of small-cell technology [cellular improvements]."

As of six months ago, 99.9% of Iowa's population is covered by the AT&T mobile broadband network, Blythe said, following several improvements to infrastructure. Providing access in rural areas, however, remains a challenge, he said.

"Areas that still lack high-speed internet often pose unique challenges such as difficult terrain, sparse population and limits of technology, [which] combine to create a barrier that few providers have been able to overcome without outside funding," Blythe said. "Support from the federal government can tip the scale and create a business case in favor of deployment, but only if the requirements that come with that funding are reasonable and clear."

One of AT&T's investments in rural connectivity is its work with the First Responder Network Authority to build and manage FirstNet, a nationwide, high-speed broadband communications platform for first responders and public safety agencies. The platform uses boosted Band 14 spectrum set aside specifically for FirstNet.

"We look at Band 14 as public safety's VIP lane; in an emergency, this band, or lane, can be cleared and locked just for FirstNet subscribers," Blythe said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 &gt;



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### IMPROVEMENTS IN TELEHEALTH CONNECTIVITY

The pandemic has also underscored the lack of access in Iowa to health care services in some rural areas, said Ashley K. Thompson, director of government and external affairs for UnityPoint Health.

“With the pandemic came concerns for some of our patients who were fearful of seeking care in their local clinic or hospital but were unable to access care through telehealth because of limited broadband access,” said Thompson, who also serves as a board member and executive committee member of the Iowa Rural Development Council and as a board member for the Iowa Rural Health Association.

High-speed internet is an important tool in the use of telehealth, which allows doctors and other health care providers to connect with patients in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, she said.

“For many Iowans – and in particular, those living in rural communities – broadband serves as a critical gateway to accessing health care,” Thompson said. “With statewide and national shortages of providers like psychiatrists and neurologists, for example, the use of technology like telehealth can bring these important physical and mental health care services to Iowans who would otherwise not have direct access to these types of services in their homes or local hospital or clinic.”

Without a reliable broadband network, health care providers are unable to connect with patients in their homes

### A CUSTOM PUBLICATION FOR ABI

as well, and see firsthand how patients are progressing, whether that be physically or mentally.

“Ensuring that Iowans and health care providers have universal access to fast, affordable broadband will help remove barriers to accessing lifesaving care and addressing social determinants of health through telehealth services,” Thompson said. “Access to broadband is a critical step in putting all of us, regardless of whether we live in an urban, suburban or rural community, on more equal footing.”

### CONNECTING EVERY FIELD

One of Iowa’s largest manufacturing companies, John Deere has been at the forefront of improving connectivity for the agricultural industry. As agriculture becomes more competitive, farmers have increasingly turned to technologies such as robotics, sensors, aerial imagery and GPS to become safer, more profitable, efficient and environmentally friendly.

Farmers manage a complex set of data each season that influences the decisions they make on the field, from spring tillage to ground compaction, to number of seeds planted, soil conditions, spray applications, yields and more. An average farm can have more than 350 billion data points to consider when trying to produce the best yield, said Ryan Krogh, senior product manager for connected fleet at John Deere.

“Some of these larger operations are moving fleets across multiple fields, getting the people trucked there at the right

time, making sure the seed stays full in that planter and that customer can keep their planter running to optimize their operation to take as much waste out of their system as possible,” Krogh said. “Connectivity enables all of that. It allows that grower to see on their phone or on their tablet or their desktop in real time where their machines are at, how they’re running. That planting window is really only about three weeks wide. So how do we make sure that we help that customer get their crop in at that optimal window?”

Agronomics and connectivity allow farmers to plan out their planting season ahead of time, so they’re not playing a guessing game when they turn on their equipment.

“I think about the farmers I visit and the complexity of their operation and all the decisions that they have

to make on a day-to-day, even minute-by-minute standpoint, and all the day-to-day input that they have to take and make these decisions,” he said. “They make all these decisions through spring planting and they try to analyze it and view it and bring in all these inputs together, and it’s very complex. And yet you don’t get to see the outcome of that decision until months later when you’re actually harvesting the crop. What we are truly trying to go after is how do we get the data in our customer’s hands exactly when they need it to make better decisions?”

Krogh pointed out that the average farmer doesn’t get the chance to test out their data very often.

“A 20-year-old taking over their family farm probably only gets to run that experiment about 40 times in their life,” he said. “They’ll have 40 times to get it right. How do we help them make better decisions each and every time? A big part of that is getting the data from the customer’s operation directly to the decision-maker as fast as possible, in real time. Connectivity is just a huge part of how that data transfers from the customer’s operation into a form that they can ultimately use. They can’t do that without connectivity across that customer’s entire operations.”

At least 19 million Americans lack access to broadband. In rural areas, nearly one-fourth of the population, or 14.5 million people, are without broadband service, according to the FCC. To help combat that, the FCC last year established the 5G Fund for Rural America, which will provide \$9 billion for 5G wireless broadband connectivity. About \$1 billion of that fund is focused on precision agriculture.

“I think that’s key, that’s a major government initiative and acknowledgement that we have an opportunity to close that gap and drive broadband out to more rural communities for use in agricultural applications,” Krogh said.

Not only do John Deere’s green tractors come equipped with such advanced technology, the company’s factories are increasingly outfitted with automation, internet of things, artificial intelligence and other technologies. Running such advanced manufacturing operations requires high bandwidth, which is why John Deere worked with the FCC to bring 5G to more rural areas in Iowa.

As part of the 5G Fund for Rural America, John Deere last year bid for and won a Citizens Broadband Radio Service auction operated by the FCC for 3.5 gigahertz spectrum access. The win means John Deere will implement 5G in its factories in Rock Island, Ill., and in Dubuque, Scott County, Polk County and Black Hawk County in Iowa in 2022.

“We participate at multiple levels trying to advance initiatives around expanding broadband coverage to all rural communities, and we continue to advocate where we can and try to drive visibility to that issue,” Krogh said.

Deere’s acquisition and network buildouts could end up improving access for farmers as well. If so, it would fit with one of the company’s goals, to improve connectivity in rural areas for farmers.

“We don’t just want every farm connected, we want every field connected,” Krogh said. “We want every customer connected.” ■

## EXPERIENCED TEAM EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Fredrikson & Byron ranked a top 15 U.S. law firm in PitchBook’s *Annual Global League Tables* for Mergers & Acquisitions, Private Equity and Venture Capital closed deals in 2020.



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## EXPERT ADVICE

# Working Remotely – Is This the New Normal?

Remote working or “telecommuting” became the “new normal” for many employers as they continue to face the lingering challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, with vaccinations ramping up and some relief from the challenges of the pandemic on the horizon, the question becomes whether employers are willing or able to continue offering remote work as a benefit to their employees.

As companies determine whether to continue remote working past the pandemic, employers should be mindful of certain legal risks and challenges posed by remote working. Each of these legal risks could be a potential liability in any in-person or remote work environment and should be taken into consideration:

- Discrimination
- Timekeeping and Overtime
- Employee Expense/Equipment Reimbursements
- Health and Safety
- Privacy and Security/Cybersecurity
- Impact on All Aspects of the Business
- Location of Remote Workers (i.e., state laws vary regarding employment-related issues)
- Employee Productivity Monitoring

Employers considering including remote working as an employee benefit moving forward should implement policies and procedures to govern the remote work environment. Besides keeping employees on track while working remotely, such policies and procedures will help avoid potential legal problems that can arise from a remote work arrangement. Employers’ policies and procedures governing remote working arrangements should include the following:

- A reminder that workplace policies and procedures continue to govern
- Monitoring of Communications and Productivity
- Procedure for requesting remote work arrangements
- Timekeeping – including overtime worked
- Meal and Rest Break
- Expense Reimbursement
- Sick/Vacation Pay or Leaves of Absence
- Safety
- Workers’ Compensation Coverage ■



**Danielle D. Smid**  
Member/Attorney,  
BrownWinick Law Firm  
[danielle.smid@brownwinick.com](mailto:danielle.smid@brownwinick.com)

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**Leadership Iowa**  
Marshalltown

**JUNE 8-10**

**Taking Care of Business Conference**  
Coralville/Iowa City

**JUNE 8-10**

**Leadership Iowa**  
Coralville/Iowa City

**JULY 18-22**

**Business Horizons**  
Central College | Pella

**JULY 29-30**

**Okoboji CEO Forum**  
Okoboji

**AUGUST 8-12**

**Leadership Iowa University**  
Des Moines Area

**AUGUST 30**

**Executive Open**  
West Des Moines

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