

NEK Broadband Mission Statement

The NEK Community Broadband Communications Union District (NEK Broadband) is a community-driven organization working to provide equitable and affordable access to high-speed internet across our region as a vehicle for ensuring the economic and social prosperity of the entire Northeast Kingdom of Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans County. To achieve this, we support the development and maintenance of a network that serves our communities now and proactively evolves to anticipate and meet future needs, while balancing affordability, sustainability, and fiscal responsibility.

Unanimously Amended & Affirmed by NEK Broadband Governing Board,

November 11, 2021

Service Goals

We hold ourselves accountable for achieving these service goals for our communities. We exercise flexibility and humility in evaluating the best balance of strong partnerships and direct service in achieving these goals as quickly, responsibly, affordably, and efficiently as possible.

- *Ensure* access to at least a reliable 100mbps symmetrical level of service for every e911 address served by electric utility service in our district. NEK Broadband will consider premises without electric utility service in the future.
- Pursue a logical network buildout while prioritizing service to unserved and underserved (*under 25/3mbps*) locations, especially those designated by the state as priority address.
- Where geography or the urgency of upgrading 4/1 levels of service requires temporary subsidizing of alternative service or infrastructure with a quicker delivery or lower cost, prioritize infrastructure that can be easily upgraded.
- Support our towns, hospitals, fire departments, and other community bodies as they work to improve first-responder coverage and cellular service within our district.

- Promote knowledge-sharing and partnerships that improve awareness and access to benefits of quality, equitable internet such as telecommuting employment and online/remote education, and community building.
- As a community-driven organization, fiscal responsibility is a priority but profit is not. All fees are used to pay operational expenses connected to our mission or to subsidize equitable access to services.
- Listen to our communities. Use objective metrics and community surveys to gauge success, guide improvement, and hold us accountable to community service.
- Create opportunities for the community to exercise control over what broadband service solutions look like by ensuring NEK Broadband owns or controls the fiber distribution network as well as the last-mile and to the home infrastructure.

Operating Principles

- Make informed decisions about how to implement reliable and extensible technology based on what is available now, while leaving the door open to adapting to future changes in the technology landscape.
 - All internet technologies, with the exception of satellites, require a strong fiber middle-mile infrastructure.
 - Mixing supported technologies (e.g. Fiber To the Home [FTTH] and wireless) introduces additional operational complexity and overhead.
 - FTTH delivers the most reliable and extensible service which meets the 100/100 mbps mandate. As such, this technology should be prioritized for deployment over other wired or wireless technologies where appropriate. Wireless should be reserved for point-to-point or point-to-multipoint applications that connect a small number of addresses where costs and topography make fiber prohibitive.
- Resiliency is a critical requirement for reliable, quality service. As such, investment in a well-designed middle-mile network infrastructure is paramount. This means:
 - Utilize best-of-class established network design architecture, such as resilient rings, to ensure there are no single points of failure.

- When relying on partners, require exceptional Service Level Agreement provisions and/or proof of resilient architecture to ensure reliable backhaul service.
 - Plans should account for the fact that typical wireless provider data caps are not an acceptable condition for quality, long-term broadband service.
- Make decisions based on existing technology. Evaluate emerging technology as it is adopted in other communities so that we can plan for migration should that be justified.
- Champion education, economic prosperity, civic health, freedom of information exchange, competition, privacy, and innovation through:
 - Support of strong net neutrality policies.
 - Adoption of open-access policies to allow surplus network capacity to be leased to partners that share our vision and further our mission.
 - Pursuit of mutually beneficial partnerships with other like-minded organizations including local utilities and other communications providers.
 - Modeling our commitment to these principles through transparent and inclusive operation of NEK Broadband and related enterprises.
- Keep it local.
 - When possible, NEK Broadband will hire a local workforce.
 - When possible, NEK Broadband will utilize businesses with local ties for construction and operation.
 - Profits from NEK Broadband will be reinvested in the network or used to increase affordability once the network is built.
- Work to expand participation of under-represented population segments in the workforce. Eliminate barriers for businesses owned by women and minorities.