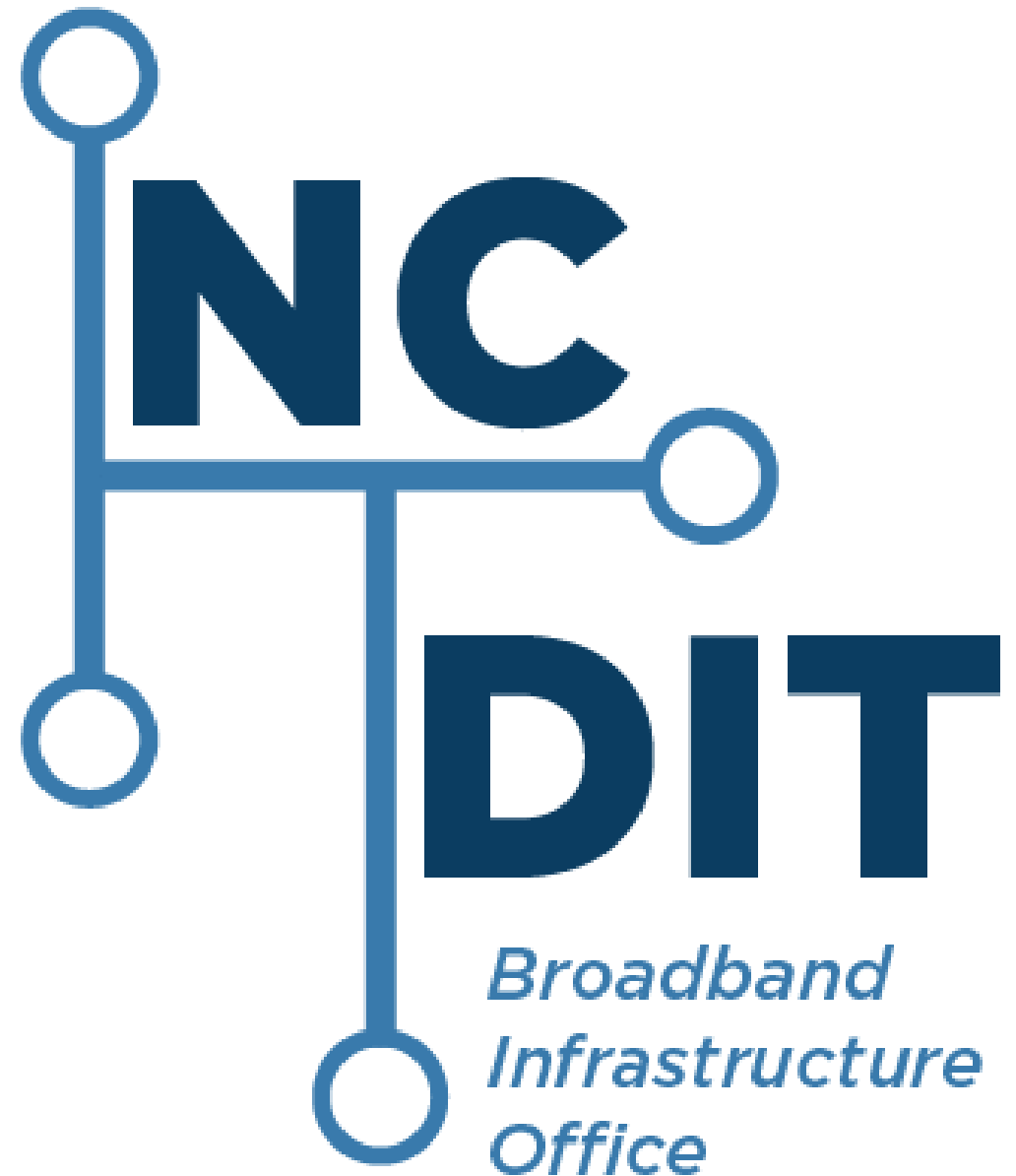


HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

Economic Support Working Group

Jeff Sural, Director

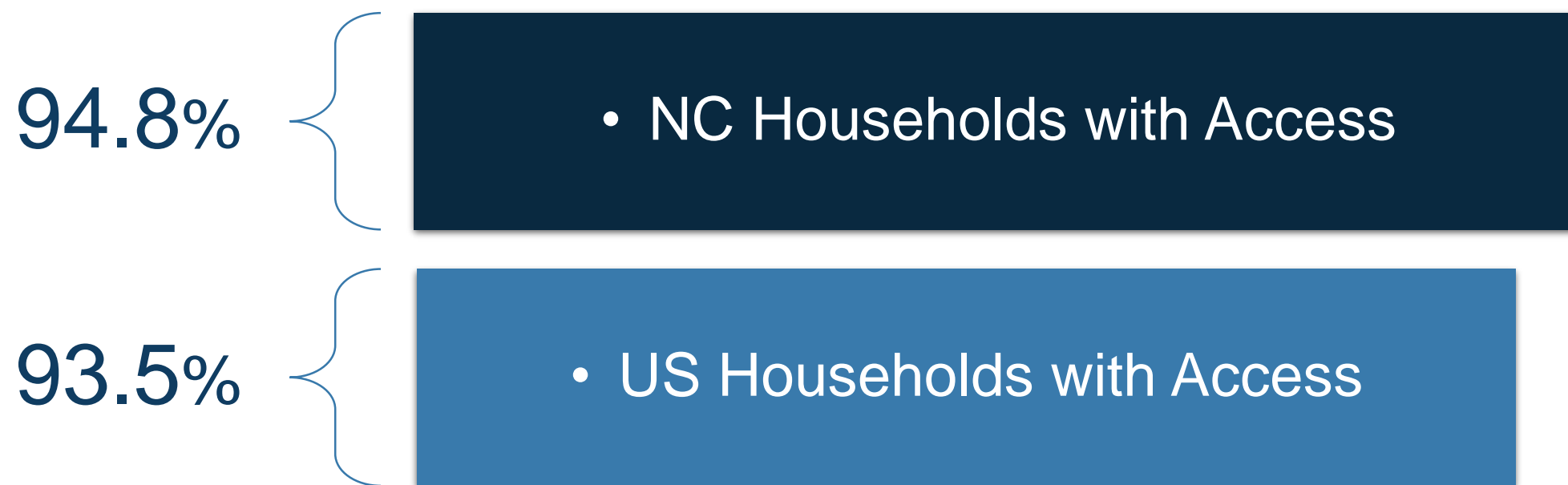
April 14, 2020



Current Status

- ISPs reporting networks handling traffic
 - Moving from urban centers to suburban
- EM situation reports positive
- No major issues with 911 calls
- ISPs have stepped up to help
- Many local governments and school districts providing WiFi access, hotspots, buses with WiFi
- Coordination and cooperation between state agencies and between state and local governments
- Situation highlights the unserved areas and challenges and accentuates the need for accelerating permanent solutions

Broadband Availability

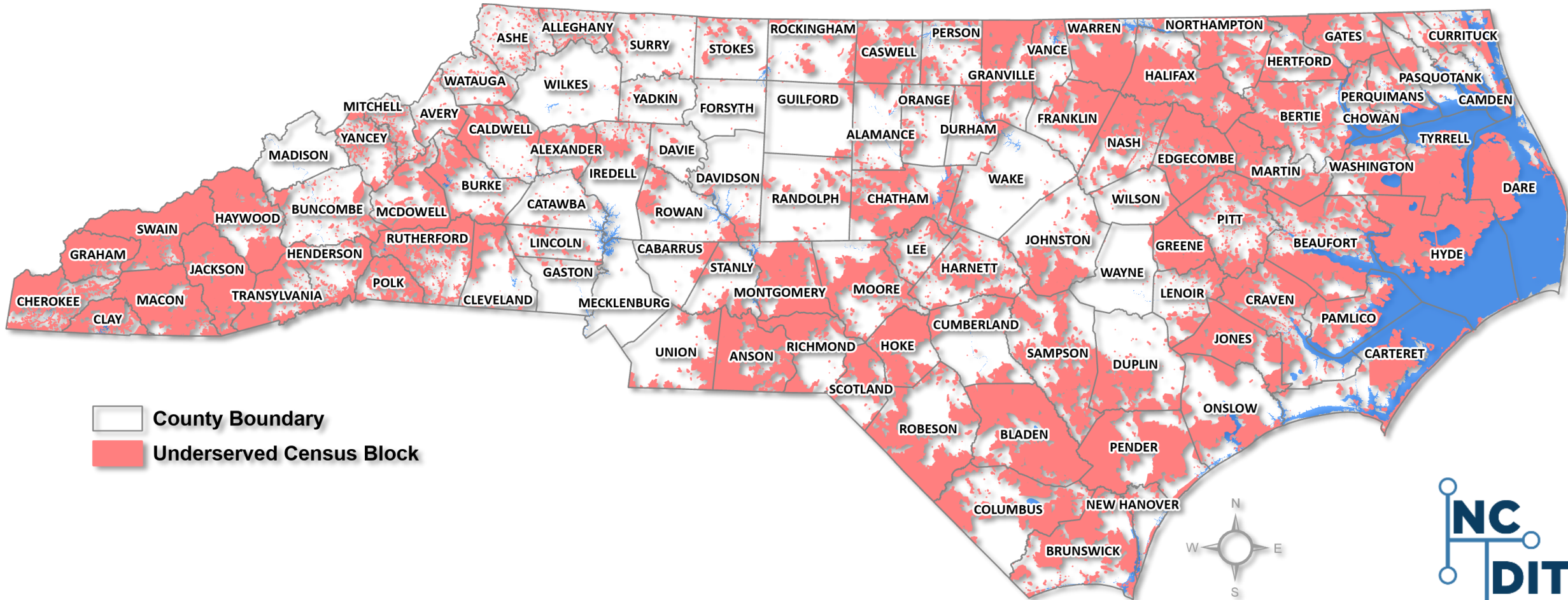


NC Broadband Service Inventory

Underserved Census Blocks

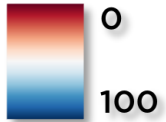
Data derived from U.S. Federal Communications Commission Form 477

Data Release Dec. 2018.



By Census Tract

The Broadband Adoption Potential Index' is a compilation of eight indicators (see below for list) combined to create a holistic measure of broadband access in NC's counties. For more information about the methodology, purpose, and how to understand your county's score visit: www.ncbroadband.gov

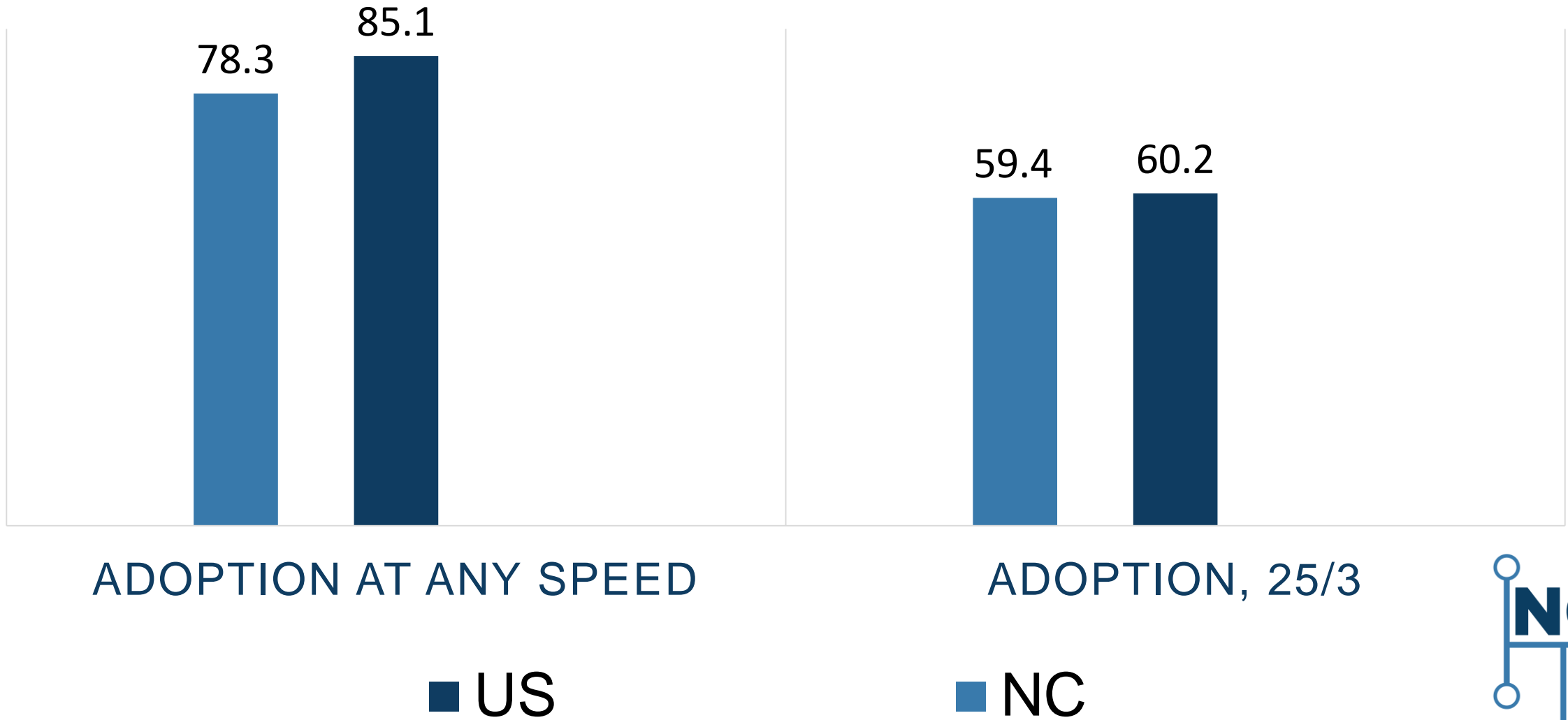


Broadband Availability and Quality Index Indicators:

- Percent of the population with access to 25/3 Mbps broadband service
- Percent population with access to 100/20 Mbps broadband service
- Percent population with access to fiber
- Ratio of upload to download median advertised speeds
- Households per square mile
- Percent housing units built in 2010 or later
- Percent population with access to no providers
- Percent population with access to DSL only

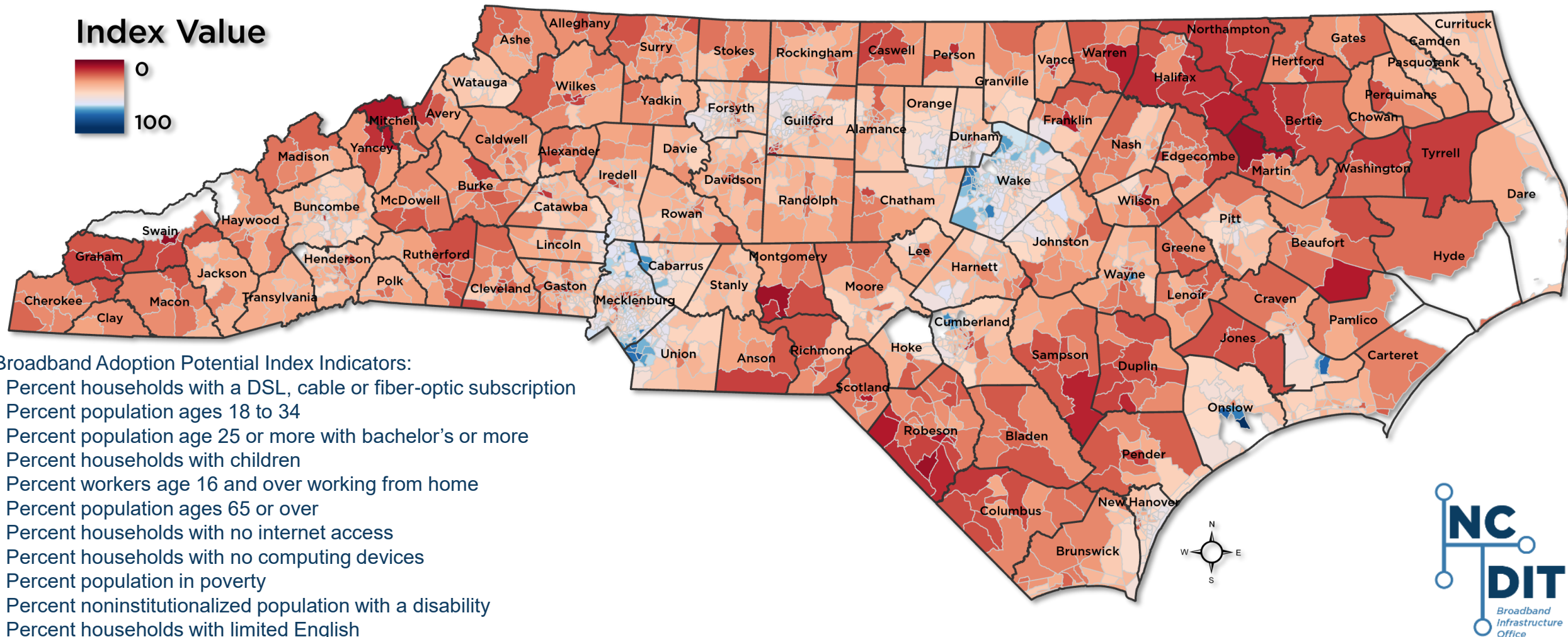


2017/2018 Broadband Adoption Rates



NC Broadband Adoption Potential Index By Census Tract

'The Broadband Adoption Potential Index' is a compilation of eleven indicators (see below for list) combined to create a holistic measure of county's broadband adoption potential. For more information about the methodology, purpose, and how to understand your county's score visit: www.ncbroadband.gov



COVID-19:

NCDIT Immediate Response

Immediate Response

- FCC Pledge: don't terminate service; waive late fees; open WiFi hotspots
- Governor Cooper call with NC internet service providers
 - Most above and beyond FCC pledge
- Interactive map, website listing free and reduced-price internet offerings and public WiFi access locations: ncbroadband.gov/covid19broadband/
- Identify resources to procure school bus equipment to support WiFi access
- Providing LEAs and DPI with guidance and support on convenience contracts for cellular service, tablets, hot spots, and laptops and negotiate better prices for duration of emergency; NCDIT Cybersecurity support
- Interagency Coordination/Communication: DPI, DHHS, EM, Counties, COGs

Immediate Response

- Expedite rolling payments for existing GREAT grant recipients to encourage faster deployment.
- Exploring FCC waiver to allow school networks to serve as backhaul (\$6M/mo.)
- Support the Attorney General's convening responsibility pursuant to EO 124 with telecommunications providers regarding consumer protection rules
- Expedite issuance of next generation Dig Once policy
 - Expedite issuance of guidance to local governments for municipal road projects.
- Use DIT iCenter authority to identify pilot sites for small-scale wireless projects
- DIT/DHHS to identify opportunities for investment on telehealth, including possible appropriation requests

COVID-19:

Near-term Solutions

Near-term Solutions

- Request that private sector internet service providers:
 - Extend the FCC pledge terms for an additional 90 days.
 - Offer free or cost-based equipment and service for 6 months or until first of the next school year leveraging the FCC's lifting of the E-rate 'no gift' rule, provide free equipment, computers to schools
 - State-negotiated agreement with fiber-optic manufacturers and tower companies to provide low-cost or low-lease rates for providers awarded federal or GREAT grants.
 - Request ISPs submit accurate coverage data to enable better identification of unserved households.

Near-term Solutions

- Request federal emergency appropriation to include block grants to the states to support the purchase of hotspots, cellular enabled laptops and equipment for Wi-Fi on buses.
- In conjunction with next-generation Dig Once policy issuance, urge local governments, sanitary districts, tribes, and others political subdivisions to relax or allow joint trenching, pole attachments, etc., with streamlined permitting and temporary waiver of fees (or retrospective fair and equitable fee structure as determined by PUC).

Near-term Solutions

- Identify resources to support procurement of up to 100,000 devices and services for unserved students for 6 months.
 - Homework gap currently estimated at 197,139 households.
 - Governor's last budget included \$5M for devices for LEAs to close homework gap.
 - Device estimate may be lower due to number of students who live in areas with no cellular service, as well as households with multiple students.

COVID-19:

Long-term Solutions

Long-term Solutions

- Ensure adequate federal grant funding is coming to the state
- Increase GREAT Grant to \$135M and amend grant proposal evaluation criteria to specifically fund areas not funded through federal programs and allow DIT flexibility to amend criteria and protest process for projects during state of emergency.
 - GREAT amendment or new program to support low-orbit satellite service; subsidy to rural homeowners for the equipment.
- Pass FIBER NC act allowing county and local governments to finance or install infrastructure for use by internet service providers.
- Establish tax credit for broadband providers that accept federal Lifeline subsidy for home access.
- Require health insurance coverage for telemedicine services and connectivity costs.
- Consumer Protections:
 - Raise the broadband definition to 25/25 to create a minimum service threshold that can be used for grant funding
 - Hold ISPs to a contractual commitment: if you say 10/1, then serve at 10/1
 - Home equipment standards