



National Lieutenant Governors Association

NLGA State Strategies in Agriculture & Rural Affairs "State Strategy for Rural Recovery Post-COVID: A Report" Indiana Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch

The state of Indiana is distinctly rural, a fact that Hoosiers are proud of. Nearly half of our counties are rural, and one in three residents live in rural Indiana. As the lieutenant governor, I have a unique role in supporting these communities by helping agriculture, small business, industry, and infrastructure to thrive.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented challenges in Indiana and across the country. Recovery for rural communities from the COVID-19 pandemic will require an "all hands on deck" approach, which is why Indiana has created the "[Rural Road to Recovery Plan](#)" to help communities across the state rebound.

Of particular importance to rural communities is our continued work to **expand affordable broadband coverage across the state**. I created the Indiana Broadband Office (IBO) in 2018 to update the Indiana Statewide Broadband Strategic Plan, and the IBO is now focused on **expanding digital inclusion in the economic development efforts of all Indiana communities**, as well as acting as a main point-of-contact for all things broadband in the aftermath of COVID-19 and beyond. And, Indiana's Next Level Connections program will provide **\$100 million in grants for broadband deployment**, which is critical to expanding the opportunities for e-learning, telehealth, and remote work.

In my capacity as lieutenant governor, I oversee a suite of departments and initiatives poised to assist rural communities:

- Indiana State Department of Agriculture ([ISDA](#)),
- Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs ([OCRA](#)),
- Indiana Destination Development Corporation ([IDDC](#)),
- Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority ([IHCDA](#)), and
- Indiana Broadband Office ([IBO](#)).

Through this work, the administration is **managing economic development for agribusinesses, providing mortgage, housing and rental financial assistance, strengthening the tourism industry, and supporting small businesses**.

Despite the challenges, Indiana's rural communities are uniquely poised to thrive in the aftermath of COVID-19. Ninety percent of the state's population lives within commuting distance of an urban core, making Indiana's small towns a unique opportunity for young professionals and families to live near employment centers while enjoying a rural home life. And the already robust coordination among state agencies to serve rural communities means we have great advantages on the road to economic recovery.

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