



# CSG East | 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting NEW HAMPSHIRE 2022

## Conference Newsletter - August 17, 2022

### The Time is Now to Address Broadband Gap

The COVID pandemic changed the way we work, and states have been exploring ways to ensure their residents can keep up.

This “tech new deal” affecting the United States includes one of the biggest investments in broadband since 2008. “We have not seen the amount of healthy investment in broadband since the American Recovery Act,” said Nicol Turner Lee, PhD, director for the Center for Technology Innovation at The Brookings Institution. “It’s important to take advantage of this time.”

Lee was a panelist for Tuesday’s luncheon session, “The Age of Transformation: Workforce Development and Education in a Post-COVID Economy.”

The ability to work remotely grew during the early days of the pandemic, but some people fell through the cracks. Lee’s forthcoming book – *Digitally Invisible: How the Internet Is Creating a New Underclass* – explores the gap and how it affects those without adequate access.

“Let’s be smart,” she said. “It’s about closing the divide, preparing people for the next generation.”

Many of the people who have been left out are those in rural America, said Matt Dunne, executive director for the Center on Rural Innovation, which he founded in 2017.

He said it’s been clear that the recovery from the Great Recession was unequal, and many rural areas haven’t reached that pre-2008 level. The recovery as we emerge from the COVID pandemic, he said, is just as unequal.

“We decided our role could take that head on and to help communities build tech economies,” he said. That means companies in rural America wouldn’t have to look to cities to find tech workers; they could find them locally.

Lee reminded attendees that there are plenty of opportunities and funds available “to help communities to transition from where they are today



Scott Spradling, founder, The Spradling Group, left, moderated a panel discussion featuring Matt Dunne, founder and executive director of the Center of Rural Innovation, center, Amelia Manning, chief operating officer, Southern New Hampshire University, and Dr. Nicol Turner Lee, director of the Center for Technology Innovation at The Brookings Institution. Photo by Mary Schwalm.

to where they need to be tomorrow.

In the middle of this conversation is higher education, and Amelia Manning, chief operating officer for Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, said SNHU has been tracking how higher education needs to continue to evolve to support not only students, but also their communities and states.

“We have a strong belief that degrees will continue to be important, but we have to, as a university, also be able to provide other kinds of forms and credentials that lead to jobs, in the tech space in particular because the skills are so specific.”

She said higher education has not done well in skills-specific areas.

Lee suggested state leaders develop goals and have a digital equity plan and a workforce plan in place.

“Your focus should be on what are our workforce goals going to come from this opportunity,” she said.

Dunne said more money is available now for broadband expansion. “You need to make sure your state is in a position with respect to public private partnerships to make the most of it,” he said. “If you want to bring fiber to the home, do it right.”

### Meeting Reminders

#### Save the Date

The CSG East 62nd Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum will be held Aug. 20-23, 2023, in Toronto.

The 2023 Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy will be held Aug. 27-31, 2023, in Philadelphia.

#### Don’t Forget the App

We encourage you to download the meeting app, where you can find program information in a format made for your phone, and visit our attendee website to see the full agenda.

#### Stay Safe

CSG East advocates following current New Hampshire Department of Health COVID guidelines, and the current meeting venues’ and hotels’ rules for COVID mitigation.

Masking is strongly recommended indoors except when eating, drinking or presenting and outdoors in groups when physical distancing is not possible. Special care should be taken by those at higher risk or those caring for young children or more vulnerable adults.



## Manchester Moments



Top left, Terry Pfaff, chief operating officer for the General Court of New Hampshire, Vermont Rep. Carolyn Partridge, and New Jersey Assemblyman Sterley Stanley attended the SGAC reception dinner Monday night. Top right, New Hampshire Sen. Jay Kahn joined others at the Friends of Canada reception. Center row, left, Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig welcomed attendees to the Queen City during the luncheon Tuesday. Center, CSG East Director David Biette spoke during the receptions. Center right, New York Assemblymember Billy Jones participated in discussions during the Canada-U.S. Relations meeting. Participants in the ARMI tour and the Ag/Brightfarms tours enjoyed experiences away from the hotel meeting rooms.

Photos by Mary Schwalm





## As Offshore Wind Advances, Experts Urge Regional Collaboration on Transmission Planning

Off the coast of Massachusetts, Vineyard Wind is erecting 62 massive wind turbines in federal waters, each as tall as the Eiffel Tower. Sometime next year, the turbines will start delivering electricity into the New England grid – enough to power 400,000 homes. The project is the first in a string of commercial-scale wind farms in a fast-growing industry that offers a huge opportunity for economic growth.

During a briefing to the CSG East Energy and Environment Committee on Tuesday morning, Christian Scorzoni, director of government affairs for Vineyard Wind, said the developer has committed \$15 million to support workforce training, supply chain development, and marine mammal protection in Massachusetts, and has also established an operations and maintenance facility on Martha's Vineyard.

"We're working hard to connect local vendors with the offshore wind industry to get locals trained. There's lots going on in this space that we're really excited about," he said.

The group also heard about efforts further north to harness the prodigious winds blowing in the Gulf of Maine, often referred to as the "Saudi Arabia of Wind." Overall, some 30 gigawatts (GW) are on track for development by 2030 in East Coast waters, enough to power roughly 20 million homes. The industry is expected to support tens of thousands of jobs and reduce carbon pollution, but participants emphasized the need for better regional coordination, particularly on transmission planning.

Peter Shattuck, president of Anbaric New England, said that building a planned transmission system to connect with multiple wind farms can reduce environmental impacts and other conflicts in the offshore space, and lower costs for both onshore and offshore transmission. New Jersey is pursuing this planned approach with regional grid operator PJM, Inc., and the results have been impressive, said Shattuck.

Last year, PJM held a competitive solicitation of managed transmission projects to achieve the state's goal of developing and integrating 7.5 GW of offshore wind into the grid by 2035. The state received 80



Christian Scorzoni, director of government affairs for Vineyard Wind, discussed offshore wind production during the CSG East Energy and Environment Committee Tuesday morning. Photo by Mary Schwalm.

bids from 13 developers, including Anbaric, to cost-effectively deliver power from offshore development to customers, and is planning to announce the winning awards in October.

Like other states to the north, New Jersey is moving forward to develop a new supply chain and port infrastructure. The state is building a wind port along the Delaware River that is expected to support up to 1,000 jobs and \$500 million in economic activity annually, and a manufacturing facility for monopiles further south, said New Jersey Board of Public Utilities Commissioner Bob Gordon.

New Jersey has issued two solicitations for the development of roughly 3.7 GW of offshore wind, and plans to hold three more by 2026. These solicitations send a clear signal to the marketplace that the state is making a long-term commitment to offshore wind, said Gordon. "We're in this for the long run."

--Rona Cohen

## Medicaid in a Post-COVID World: Waivers Can Provide Flexibility for States

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught states a lot about health policy, especially around Medicaid.

The pandemic, speakers at a Health Policy session Tuesday morning said, highlighted inequities in health care across the states.

"It highlighted communities without access where COVID has the highest impact on communities with the least access to health care," said Rhode Island Sen. Joshua Miller. In his state, it also highlighted a lack of trust and a lack of competency in dealing with the pandemic.

In Maryland, said Del. Joseline Peña-Melnyk, chair of the House Health and Government Operations Committee, it also illustrated the need for more oversight, especially as executive orders proliferated during the early days.

She, too, noted the impact on communities of color and how they were affected. "We started thinking about equity, but we also started thinking about racism. For the Black and Brown communities, there is structural racism," she said. "You have to really think about the history."

In addressing some of these issues, states found ways to improve the health care delivery system. Peña-Melnyk worked to pass legislation to recognize racism as a public health issue and create a commission on health equity, which is required to provide yearly recommendations to state leaders on how to improve the lives of those who are marginalized.



Maryland Del. Joseline Peña-Melnyk joined the discussion about Medicaid in a Post-COVID World Tuesday morning. Photo by Mary Schwalm.

Both Maryland and Rhode Island addressed the use of telehealth in communities across the states.

"Telehealth was one, but not the only effort and opportunity, to expand health care to where it was not present," Miller said.

In Maryland, legislation was passed to ensure undocumented pregnant women have access to prenatal care. But COVID also illustrated the impact on state budgets and economies when undocumented people don't have access to health care. Many of them are on the front lines as restaurant workers, grocery workers, and nursing home caregivers.

"If those people have less access to health care, it's going to not only affect them, it's going to affect the community because of the pandemic," Miller said.

The health care system continues to change and the pandemic has provided some valuable lessons. But to adapt with Medicaid, states need to be more aware of potential for change through the Medicaid waiver process, Miller and Peña-Melnyk said.

"States are very shy. They (CMS) would love for states to be creative and submit these waivers and just try and they would be willing to do it," Peña-Melnyk said.

--Mary Branham