Otter Tail BBC Pre-Registration Survey Results

8/12/20
Updated 8/17/20 (responses 1-4 added)
Updated 8/19/20 (responses 1-4 added)
Updated 8/21/20 (responses 1-7 added)

Please describe how your home or business Internet [Broadband] connection supports or hinders your online world.

1. The Internet is used daily to support our online registration and communication.

2. My home internet is generally very reliable and allows me to work from home. Charter internet at my office has been more of an issue, especially considering what we pay for it.

3. As city government internet connection is of vital importance to maintaining a cities functionality.

4. I have always had access to reliable internet, enabling me to work remotely for several years. I'm no longer working remotely, but during the pandemic have had the option to work from home, which I've taken advantage of.

5. I am currently working from home and have internet services through Charter Spectrum. I have no issues with my internet service on my computer while in my home but does not work well once I am outside on my patio. Other than that I have no concerns with my service.

6. Essential to what we do every day, must have.

7. Quality access at home has allowed me to easily work remotely

8. School Internet lets students and teachers connect when offsite.

9. We are dependent on the internet to conduct our business

10.

11. Although Arvig offers high speed internet, I find the service to be slow. When working for a city I often have several programs open at a time. Broadband would help significantly.

12. Internet connection is a vital to my job.

13. good

14. The internet connection I have access to both at home and at work enables me to work effectively in a virtual environment.

15. Home-goes our often and we lose internet ability.

16. Our city uses internet to work with various partners

17. Having a high quality broadband connection is essential to my business model. I use multiple SAAS products and video conferencing apps.

18. Use it every day for work, research, information and household with students.

19. We currently have excellent internet but at our last resident we spent a lot of money to have slow intermittent internet

20. I have an online home office. Been working from home for 6+ years.

21. I have excellent broadband connections at work and at home. Through the public library, where I work, we provide Internet access to the public. I am aware of a large number of people who

access the library's free WiFi day and night because they have no other source for Internet connectivity.

22. Work is fine. Home internet is not good. Live just outside of town in a development with 5-75 homes (oakview heights and highland trail) and we do not have fiber while communities, towns, and lakes further away are getting more reliable internet. We actually have a FB group for our development where the internet speed has been discussed and no one is happy.

23. We educate K-12 students with online content hosted on premise and cloud based in coordination with communication between teachers and students.

24. Interestingly, I was just trying to log into my work VPN and the internet connection is so poor, everything stops. So, instead, I have to rework my day until the connection is better. Even at its best, it is painfully slow. I pay for the highest amount of speed available to me.

25.

26. Internet connection is extremely important - my home and business are within the City of Fergus Falls. This is necessary for my professional and personal life. I have no complaints

27.

28. Current bandwidth has been sufficient, but with more need for online learning (school district) we are worried about bandwidth capabilities of delivering instruction effectively via an online/virtual means.

29. I have fiber to my home/home office and it is amazing, however it was crazy expensive to get because we live in a rural setting. I have dsl in my office located in the city limits of Pelican Rapids and it is horrible. I repeatedly get kicked off, despite being hard wired into my router. My internet will go down for short periods of time throughout the day. It is very frustrating when trying to upload a file and the amount of time that takes.

30. Necessary for all aspects of day to day operation

31. Business internet is excellent. My home internet has some speed limitations that would show up more significantly when multiple household users are accessing data at the same time.

32. The lack of speed for our business connection has really became pronounced since COVID-19, as we have had to do much more streaming and it is difficult to accomplish with less than ideal internet connections.

33.

Please share your thoughts on how Otter Tail County is positioned to provide the high-quality [knowledge] workforce.

1. We are a global workforce and in order to retain and attract a workforce, we need to have all the tools at our disposal, including computer access.

2. We need to consider the livability of OTC in regards to things like housing, childcare and healthcare when we're looking at attracting a high quality workforce.

3. Otter Tail County with its adverse population in a multiple vacationing lakes area, with many different work situations providing high-quality workforce with proper internet connection would be vital.

4. Cost of living is less than elsewhere in the state/ country; access to nature, community leaders are clearly willing to provide infrastructure necessary to bring people to the county.

5. With a population of 58,746 people, Ottertail County is ranked 17th in the state in terms of its population. With that in mind, I would say that we are well positioned to provide a high-quality workforce. What we need to consider is if we can provide quality training, depending on what is needed to fill open positions. With access to technology, opportunities to provide people with the essential skills and credentials needed to fill positions is of high importance, as online Post-Secondary training is readily available if they have access to technology.

6. I believe they are well positioned but always room for improvement.

7.

8. Promoting and enabling high quality education programs and schools.

9. Otter Tail County has a lot of passionate people

10.

11. OTC is a large county with many opportunities. OTC is doing a great job promoting the county to encourage housing, which leads to the need for a healthy workforce.

12. Internet options are sketchy in many areas of the county. It is important that this improves in order to encourage new residents to our area.

13. ok

14. Otter Tail County has good schools, a community and technical college, strong manufacturing sector, healthcare, is rich in natural beauty (which attracts workforce) and is increasingly growing and promoting its arts and cultural sectors. In addition, Otter Tail County has strong communities each with their own distinct features and amenities. The combination of which both brings workforce to Otter Tail County and attracts workforce to Otter Tail County.

15. ?

16. We have the opportunity for entry level jobs, but often we do not find people who want to consistently take those jobs. Also, expertise is hard to find (medical, engineers, etc)

17. I think we have all the resources, but they are underutilized and advertised by the community.

18. Well positioned due to unique landscape, lakes and water desirable to many.

19. We have an excellent secondary school and excellent young people with great potential graduating every year

20. If one can work from home...you will find a larger workforce and may keep seasonal people here year-around. Dual incomes are necessary...telework allows partners to be employed.

21. Otter Tail County is positioned well to provide a high-quality workforce. Ensuring people and businesses have the tools they need to work in person or remotely is essential. Issues of childcare and at home education are going to require workplace flexibility and creativity.

22. If people are to being working from home and living in lakes country, we need to provide high speed internet to attract these people. The quality of life, lakes, and services is how we attract a high-quality workforce.

23. We communicate with business and community leaders to educate qualified future workers.

24. I think we have some capable companies, organizations and people to make this happen. It is the resources, including funding and government restrictions that seems to be limiting us.

25.

26. Since COVID-19, it's been challenging to wrap our arms around our workforce needs. Similar to pre-COVID, there's as large need of healthcare workers (all levels), advanced manufacturing

(welding in particular), and sometimes restaurant/retail. Additionally, the $600 (now $400) stimulus has made it challenging for employers to find new workers.

27.

28. Really not very informed in this area

29. unsure

30. Aid can be provided to defray monthly costs in times of need

31. The number one attraction is that it that it is an absolutely beautiful county. If we can provide a robust economy with affordable housing, strong schools and living-wage employment people can enjoy an incredible quality of life here.

32. Otter Tail County is in a great position for a high-quality workforce, and improving constantly. One example would be the Big Build project, which is aiming to provide additional housing which would support the communities in OTC that would be housing these new community members. Additionally, OTC has many great industries represented in their various cities.

33.

How do you think businesses and industries in Otter Tail County are using technology in an innovative way?

1. Expanding their market share by attracting people from outside, new money.

2. Not sure, beyond virtual events/meetings. There is a steep learning curve as people convert to online events. We need to remember ADA accessibility and the needs of providing closed captioning, and provide more support to seniors who are not comfortable with these formats so they can participate in important conversations.

3. With technology changing daily using it in a innovative and creative way is essential to county businesses and industries

4. I tend to think businesses/ industry in OTC do NOT use tech innovatively, or even well in many cases.

5. I think most businesses have found platforms to continue to do their day to day work whether it be via Zoom, Teams, or other platforms. Email and various apps and databases are used to communicate with people, collect data, and send documents. Access to computers and quality internet services are instrumental in a business' ability to do this.

6. Due to Covid-19 many businesses have had to diversify and do business almost exclusively on-line.

7.

8. Social Media and constant connections with their consumers, customers and students.

9. To provide information an education to residents and businesses

10.

11. In my line of work I don't see or hear this type of discussion. I don't have a thought on the issue.

12. I really don't have first-hand knowledge of this.

13. Not as much as they could.

14. Well, from a consumer perspective, I feel I am able to connect with many businesses virtually with ease--text reminders, calendar alerts and a robust social media presence is the norm. I am

not as familiar with technological innovation in the manufacturing sectors, but imagine that is ever-evolving.

15. People working and going to school at home. Connecting to different computers thru the internet

16. Minimally

17. A number of telework industries exist within the community, but there is little interaction amongst those who are doing that.

18. Marketing, research, meetings, remote work, etc.

19. Remote meetings

20. communication platforms, marketing, business development and market expansion.

21. I hope to learn more about this topic. I have seen several examples of manufactures modifying what they make to respond to the pandemic which is inspiring.

22. We are doing a number of things at ShoreMaster. I can't speak for other businesses.

23. Communication via social media.

24. We have so many telecommuters, even before the pandemic. They are working everywhere, and living here.

25.

26.

27.

28. Hope to hear more about this -- not really sure

29. I think that businesses are finding that more can be accomplished remotely and are seeing potential for growth using that ideal. However, I believe that they may be limited by lack of good equipment, lack of know-how, and lack of good internet.

30. Work from home strategies

31. From the school's perspective, we have had to switch much of our instructional model to one heavily predicated on the use of technology.

32. I would say that COVID-19 has forced businesses to advance technologically. There has been a lot of businesses who have increased social media presence, which is the first thing I notice. However, contactless payments are available virtually everywhere, which is incredibly important as this is the future of payment processing.

33.

How do you see unequal access [digital equity] to technology and the internet creating a divide in Otter Tail County? If you have an example either from your family or someone you know, please share it.

1. I think an good example is the COVID 19 and educational delivery to school age students.

2. Aside from broadband access being a barrier to people in underserved areas, many people I've been talking to have outdated equipment, so even if they have internet they don't necessarily have the updated technology to host Zoom or use an online camera/mic, etc.

3. If access is provided the only thing would be for families to be able to afford it

4. Divide between city vs rural access; access is not equitable.

5. I think the divide comes with affordability. Those who could most benefit from training for high quality positions, are those with the lowest incomes. Many of the low-income individuals residing in Ottertail County that I have worked with are employed at minimum wage jobs and often cannot afford a high quality Wi-Fi service. Some have computers that need updating or repair to work correctly as well.

6. Could be a factor of where someone decides to live based on access.

7.

8. Just like in the classroom, if a student has more difficulty seeing or hearing, their grades may not reflect their actual abilities. Lacking good quality Internet access makes it more difficult for students see and hear what is happening in their classroom in either a hybrid or distance learning situation.

9. Not everyone has access

10.

11.

12. In rural areas or in some areas of our City, it may not even be available. This becomes difficult for students and people that need to work from home.

13. Not really

14. I work in the public library field. While more people have access to devices (smart phones), affordability of regular internet service and/or lack of access to broadband internet service continues to be a concern. In addition, a widening skills gap is apparent. As more and more moves online--access to employment, healthcare, government services, financial services--some are being left behind. And these are the basics--as more and more jobs become high-tech, low-cost low-barrier opportunities to re-skill and access to tools, resources and services to assist is needed.

15. Outside of Fergus Falls and Perham the ability for high speeds are not available

16. AARP set up a tax preparation center for low income or for those who do not have access to internet; however when the CCP virus shut it down, I am unsure how those individuals had their taxes done as paper filing is difficult to do without online access to the forms.

17. We are already an OUTSTATE community, but we have fiber optic to the curb intown... those that are out of city limits are mostly limited in access. Creating an additional burden and divide

18. Some have great access (me) while others do not, creating equity issues. Also, the cost can be prohibitive for some.

19. There are areas, sparsely populated that can't get access to high speed internet because the providers can't profit off them because their cost is too high getting to them

20. Fiber to the home is best, but access through wireless networks can work. ie: VZ system.

21. Each and every day I encounter people who do not have Internet connectivity or adequate Internet access because it is either not physically available or cost-prohibitive.   I am aware of grandparents trying to use their cell phones for wireless access to help grandchildren with at home learning. Wireless connection is a bandaid and not a solution. If an adult has permission to work from home but lacks Internet access to so, they are at a terrible disadvantage. So too are children trying to learn from home.

22. Obviously, it will become more of an issue with distance learning, work from home, netflix, hulu, zoom meetings, etc. More with slower internet will possible learn less, have issues working which will make them work more, and will cause issues with perceptions.

23. It is very population density driven. There are remote areas with no access to broadband and smaller communities with little or no competition for Internet access pay much more for less.

24. When I can't do my work, of course it is going to affect how successful I am or can be. Mine might be on a smaller level, but for others, this can be huge.

25.

26. To be honest, with 99.5% of my work within the city, I'm not as knowledgeable regarding unequal access, however, I am aware it exists, with residents, businesses and students (distance learning).

27.

28. Definitely believe this exists for some of our families that we serve in terms of quality high-speed access in some of the rural areas of our school district.

29. I see disparity primarily in pretty much every corner of life, however, I see the most disparity in the school systems. In Pelican Rapids, for some homeowners/renters, even where fiber is available, it is too expensive (either perceived or real) to have. With students now required, at least partially, to distance learn by use of technology, the students with poor access are going to fail at higher rates. This is assuming that the computer equipment they have is adequate. Some equipment is provided by the school, however, most of that is below adequate, outdated, or poorly maintained due to lack of staffing or lack of knowledgeable staffing. Training is almost non-existent for students and teachers/staff alike. If we continue along this line, we will be failing our students.

30. Distance learning and agricultural applications necessity and access to it through broadband is essential

31. It is essential from an equity standpoint that all children have access to high speed internet when we are using a distance learning model for education.

32. I know that depending on the areas there are different speeds available, this makes it difficult to live outside of a town in OTC. Rural members, such as my parents, are subject to painstakingly slow internet due to where they live. If this would be remedied it would most likely increase rural populations as those who work from home would be able to be out of town.

33.

What assets should we emphasize in our [advocacy] efforts to attract people and investment to the area? What else should we be doing to strengthen Otter Tail County to make it more attractive for development and to improve the quality of life?

1. Safety, both health and personal safety.

2. We really have the full range of offerings here - arts, recreation, healthcare. We need to continue to check in with those industries to make sure we're doing what we can to protect and enhance them. We also need more options in quality childcare and housing, and more friendly tools about how to start a business here.

3. Affordable technology and access to it. Supporting your family owned businesses keeping more things local, while still providing essential services

4. Proximity to nature and the ease with which people can enact change or be involved civically is what drew me back to the area.

5. I think the quality of life is fantastic in Ottertail County. There are affordable housing options, decent job opportunities, safety, lower cost of living than in a city or suburb, access to many outdoor activities, access to major interstates, and a sense of community.

6. High Speed Internet as an asset to the county as well as a recruitment tool for industries interested in relocation.

7.

8. Find ways to make Internet access similar to larger population centers in quality, speed and cost. One hurdle is the lack of competition lower population areas.

9. The lakes, the outdoors and parks

10.

11. Currently, OTC requires land usage permits for applications within 1,000 feet of wetlands. If OTC continues this, consider advertising freedom of land use which may attract people and investments in the county. Often, people are baffled the county doesn't require land usage permits (outside of wetland area). This may be a hindrance overall though. I suppose it may attract hoarders.

12. We have so many assets -schools, natural environment, access to state and federal highways, volunteers, a variety of service and retail businesses, etc.   Quality of life includes the availability of broadband and appropriate speed throughout the area to accommodate our future businesses.

13. Lakes area | good internet | rural living | good schools | lots of jobs | good hospitals

14. Assets: --Natural surroundings and opportunities for outdoor recreation --Increasingly diverse cultural and educational opportunities. And, because it can be really cold for a really long time too :), beautiful indoor public and commercial spaces--something for all ages and interests. --Diverse employment opportunities due to a strong local and regional economy --Commitment to providing quality education and healthcare for all   What else should we be doing?   --Improving housing and childcare options seems to continue to be a need, although I know good work is being done in these areas   --Opportunities for civic engagement for newcomers (and oldcomers alike). Those who feel like they can make a difference in their communities feel like they belong, which is what quality of life is all about :)

15. Internet spots for visitors and people needing to work from car or outside locations

16. The county has many beautiful lakes, however we see fewer and few smaller restaurants or shops opening up. The larger walmarts and dollar general are pushing out others; while at the same time leaving few places to shop as they leave towns

17. The assets exist, but the exposure to the outside community is limited. We need some activities and events that target the audience we are looking to draw to come and stay in our community. COVID makes that a challenge, but I think instead of thinking "BIG" we need to think "Small" and effective. Ongoing pipeline and process to introduce ideal citizens to the community.

18. Attract folks to mid-and affordable housing.   More trails, lifestyle improvements, restaurants, etc.

19. Better internet access in these areas

20. Refer to Telework manual developed in Fergus Falls about 7 years ago.

21. It is my understanding that the first two questions people ask when moving to a location and potentially starting a business or working from home are: do you have broadband Internet? And what types of utilities do you have available and what are their rates? Many people with advanced degrees and very high paying jobs work from home, and where they live will be contingent on broadband access. Consider that many people working from home may want to live in the county or on a lake, often these areas be void of stable Internet access.

22.

23. Pave the way for more competition in the broadband arena.

24. It would be great if we could attract a new business, especially in the manufacturing area or larger office-type that has employees ready to move with it or telecommute. We would supplement employees.

25.

26. Low cost of living, low crime, quality of life, flexible zoning/design standards, low commute, lakes, recreation

27.

28. Quality, reliable high-speed connectivity throughout the county.

29. We should provide more resources to work at home scenarios. We could provide experts to build home office units that include desks and technology and then integrate them into the home making sure that they system works without interrupting other systems in the house. Along that line, that requires that there is affordable fiber to the door. Too many times a person has to piece-meal a system together, set up the technology without guidance and then gets frustrated when things don't work as intended. This is a great opportunity to let OTC be the one to promote how one can move here, have a great home set up and work remotely at their job in Minneapolis.

30. Quality of life here is a huge advantage as well as cost of living in comparison to others closer to the cities

31. High speed internet access it critical. It will help attract people whose jobs allow them to work from home. The Strib just published an article about metro people seeking lake homes in rural Minnesota where they can live and work from home. I think that is our market for sustained growth.

32. We should be emphasizing our natural resources, first and foremost. We need to take care of our lakes and our forests, this is crucial. Additionally, we should continue emphasizing economic development and general quality of life improvements. There has been a lot of great work done on this already, and I do think that the pieces in place are going to set us up for a strong future.

33.

Sustainability initiatives strive to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. They can also help businesses become more competitive as they use materials, water and energy more efficiently in their production cycle. How are people and organizations in Otter Tail County adopting sustainable practices in their operations? What barriers to sustainable practices exist?

1.
2.

3.

4. There is some understanding of sustainable practices at the government/ larger corp level, but from an individual level there is a lot of work to be done. People are still trying to wrap their heads around single sort recycling. It doesn't seem to be a focus for many, so businesses likely don't see a need to push it as an agenda.

5. I don't know a lot about this subject but I think people are becoming more aware of the importance of sustaining precious resources and that younger generations help motivate older generations. I have seen more recycling in the past few years, for example, but can't really speak beyond that at this time.

6. Right now businesses are deciding if working from home will be an advantage or disadvantage to productivity.

7.

8. No comment.

9. diversity

10.

11.

12.

13. We need to take advantage of wind energy.

14. My experience is limited in regards to sustainability initiatives underway in the business or manufacturing sector in OTC. In my former role as the director of the Fergus Falls Public Library, sustainability was a key feature of the recent remodel and expansion of the library building. The newer Fergus Falls Police Department also had a number of environmentally-friendly features in its design. Otter Tail Power assisted the City with modeling for heating, cooling and lighting systems for the library project, a valuable service. Recent initiatives to include more EV charging stations in Fergus Falls is also a visible commitment to sustainability. Barriers would likely continue to be cost--maybe in some cases access to resources or knowledge of the latest and most efficient sustainability options?

15. ?

16.

17. Perseverance and willingness to stay free of the "muck" that seems to draw people into negativity. Perhaps training that focuses on collaboration and encouragement. Customer service is an attitude of the heart... what do you think our "heart health" is?

18. Need single sort recycling county wide, etc.

19. The barriers I saw in the past are slowly being eliminated as new progressive thinkers move into decision making roles

20. pursue biobased solutions...costs have come down. plastics made from plant materials are available and very sustainable.

21. I am impressed with the efforts put forth in OTC regarding sustainability. Perhaps tax incentives could be used for companies and businesses using sustainable practices. Creating a model of cradle to cradle can greatly reduce waste. Create products that never end up in a landfill, find ways to use by-products of manufacturing to create an additional product. Reward innovation and creativity.

22.

23. No comment.

24. Otter Tail Power helps businesses and individuals practice good energy conservation. They also are doing well with the dams in the area. I believe we have a good solid waste and recycling program, although that could be improved if more recyclable materials could be sold.

25.

26.

27.

28. Not sure

29. unsure

30. Recycling

31. I would like to think we are committed to recycling and maintaining clean water/protecting the quality of our lakes.

32. I have had relatively little experience seeing this in the greater county, but from New York Mills specifically I know that we are always interested in creating more efficient operations, whether that is from our Public Works department or our businesses, we are focused on become sustainable. One organization that is leading the way is the NYM Cultural Center, who is in discussion about having solar energy.

33.